

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 102.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS IN MONTANA; OR THE GREAT COPPER MINE CASE. BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, March 1, 1899. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1900, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.

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THE BRADYS IN MONTANA:

OR,

The Great Copper-Mine Case.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

A COWARDLY ATTACK.

"Let go of me, you villain, or I'll call for the police!"

"Keep still! Do you want me to bury this dagger in your heart, girl?"

"Release me, I say! I want to get in that carriage."

"Stop your struggling."

"I won't!"

"Then take the consequences!"

"Help! help! help!"

The dim light of a street lamp showed a burly ruffian with a mask on his face, struggling furiously with a beautiful young girl.

He gripped her savagely by the throat with one hand, and was making a desperate effort to plunge a gleaming dagger into her breast.

Close by stood a private coupe from which the man had just alighted, but the driver made no effort to protect the villain's frail victim.

It was late on a dark March night, and there was no lonelier spot in New York than that section of Fifth avenue just beside Central Park.

The girl was but eighteen, handsomely dressed, and rather slender.

She was no match for the powerful ruffian, and as his vice-like grip tightened on her delicate white throat, her shrieks were stifled to a hoarse gurgle, and she fell to her knees, clutching at his arm.

The man was not intent upon robbery or abduction

There was murder in his heart.

For an instant he glared down at the distorted face of his strangling victim, then he raised the cruel knife to bury it in her heart.

But just then the active figure of a powerful youth of twenty came flying over the park wall, and rushing at the ruffian, he dealt the wretch a terrific blow in the face with his clenched fist.

It released the man's grip and knocked him down.

"You cur!" panted the boy, "what are you doing, anyway?"

He darted over to the half fainting girl as he spoke and assisted her to rise.

"Thank heaven!" she gasped hoarsely, as she leaned against the wall.

"What was he doing?" demanded the handsome boy, quickly.

"Trying to kill me," the girl answered, faintly.

"Are you injured?"

"No."

"Then I'll attend to this brute!"

He rushed at the man as he spoke, and attacked him just as he scrambled to his feet, raving and swearing at his gallant young assailant.

"I'll pay you off for interfering!" he yelled.

"We'll see about that!" grimly answered the boy.

And out shot his fist like a sledge-hammer, catching the villain so hard on the nose that he almost smashed that organ flat, and made the man reel back.

He followed up his advantage with the speed and skill of an athlete.

A shower of jabs, swings and upper-cuts rained upon the ruffian's head with terrific force and bewildering speed.

Several times the wretch tried to strike back with his knife, but the boy avoided the blows, and finally kicked the dagger out of the man's hand.

"Why don't you pay me off, you dog?" cried the boy, tauntingly, as the knife went flying over the stone wall. "I'll teach you to attempt to murder an unprotected young girl. Take that to remember me by!"

And bang! went the young fellow's fist on the man's jaw, knocking him up against a tree-box near the curb.

"Oh, you wait!" yelled the frenzied villain. "I'll——"

"You'll come to jail with me now," retorted the boy. "I'm a detective, and by thunder, nothing will please me better than to run you in!"

A cry of dismay escaped the man upon hearing this.

He recoiled, and the mask fell from his face, for the last blow he received had broken the string that held it on.

As the light of the street lamp slanted down upon his features, a stifled cry escaped from the young girl, and she started forward, pointed at the cowering rascal, and cried in tones of intense excitement:

"It's Mark Darrell, my father's partner!"

The boy observed that he was a heavy-featured man with deep eyes, a sharp nose, and a closely trimmed gray beard on the lower part of his red face.

Shaking his fist at her, he hissed furiously:

"I'm baffled to-night, Nellie Ray, but we'll meet again!"

Just then the boy rushed toward him, but tripping over the edge of the asphalt pavement, he fell to the ground.

At the same moment, the driver cried:

"Run, Mark, there's some one coming!"

The villain leaped into the carriage just as an old man, with a strong, tall figure and white hair scaled the park wall.

Crack went the driver's whip, and the spirited team of bays dashed away at a terrific pace up the silent avenue.

The newcomer had on a big, white felt hat, an old blue frock coat buttoned up to the stock and standing collar around his neck, and his strong features were cleanly shaved.

He darted over to the boy, who was attired somewhat after his fashion, and seizing his arm, he exclaimed in low tones:

"What's the row, Harry Brady? Are you in trouble?"

"No, Old King Brady, I ain't," retorted the boy, as he got upon his feet: "but I just stopped an assassin from murdering that young lady, and the villain made his escape in the coupe dashing up the avenue."

"So it was her screams that brought us here?"

"Yes, and it's lucky for her we were crossing through the park from the west side. If I hadn't tripped, I would have had the ruffian on him."

"What did he attack the girl for?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

The Bradys were two Secret Service detectives, and the mysterious affair aroused their curiosity, and led the old veteran to ask the girl in kindly tones:

"Do you mind explaining this occurrence, miss?"

The girl had recovered her faculties by this time, and glanced keenly at the speaker.

He was evidently an old-fashioned man, as cool, daring and shrewd as his boy partner, and she was impressed favorably with his kind face.

"I don't mind giving you the particulars, sir," she replied, in low, sweet tones, as she approached nearer to him. "That man was my father's business partner. I believe he murdered my father, to steal his interest in a great copper mine out in Montana. And as I am my father's heiress, I think he wants to put me out of the way, too, that there may be no claimant to wrest from him his ill-gotten gains."

"And your father's name?"

"Philip Ray."

"What?" gasped the old detective in astonishment, "are you Nellie Ray?"

"I am," replied the girl, surprised that he knew her.

"And the man who escaped, was he Mark Darrell?"

"That is his name," replied the girl, more and more astonished. "Why do you ask?"

"Because," replied Old King Brady, "we have recently received certain information about the alleged murder of your father, and we were to-night on our way to your home to see you about the matter."

"How strange!" replied the girl. "And now that we have met under such peculiar circumstances, I would be glad to have you go home with me, and I will give you all the details of this singular affair."

"Nothing would give us greater pleasure," eagerly assented the old officer.

And with the girl between them, the Bradys walked away.

These detectives, it must be explained, were the most efficient officers in the Secret Service. Their fame was world-wide, and they were a source of dread to the crooks at large, for they never were known to fail to arrest a man they were sent after.

Some years previously Old King Brady became acquainted with the boy who bore his name. Finding him ambitious to be a detective, he secured Harry's appointment on the force, and taught him the business. They then became partners.

On the night in question, their chief detailed them on some secret work.

Going to an hospital on the west side of town, they had conversation with a dying burglar, who had been shot by a policeman.

They then crossed Central Park, intending to call on Nellie Ray, when they heard her cries for help, and ran to her rescue.

As they proceeded toward her home in Seventy-second street, Old King Brady asked her:

"How came you to be over there near the park at this hour of the night?"

"I went there by appointment," replied Nellie. "A letter reached me to-day, saying the writer wished to see me privately, to give me some secret and valuable information about my father. It warned me to go alone, and the writer

would not appear, and it enjoined me to keep the appointment secret. I went to the place at ten o'clock. A coupe soon dashed up to the spot. The masked man alighted. He at once made an effort to get me into the vehicle. I resisted. The rest you know."

"And when his mask fell off you recognized him as Mark Darrell, your father's former partner in business?"

"Yes, for I had often met that man months ago. I recognized him at once."

They said no more until they reached the cosy frame cottage, into which a maid admitted them, and the detectives were ushered into the pretty little parlor.

When they were seated, Old King Brady said:

"Now, Miss Ray, if you will kindly tell us all you know about your father's connection with the Jolly Joker copper mine, we may be enabled to give you some startling news on that subject."

"Ah!" said Nellie, in startled tones. "Then you already know something about the matter? You can tell me, perhaps, whether my father was really murdered, or whether he is yet alive?"

"The information we have will startle you," replied the old detective, as he took a chew of tobacco. "And it is a story we are going to sift to the dregs, too!"

CHAPTER II.

TRACKED BY THE DETECTIVES.

Nellie Ray suppressed whatever curiosity and excitement she felt over Old King Brady's words, and after a moment's thought, she said in low tones:

"I'll make my story as brief as possible, Mr. Brady. Last year my father and I lived in Butte City. He had some money, and was a superintendent in the great Anaconda copper mine. Mark Darrell was his chum. They frequently went off prospecting together, and finally struck it rich, back in the foothills. Procuring capital, they developed their claim, and it proved to be a bonanza. It was one of the richest copper leads in Montana. My father told me it would make a millionaire of him, in due time. An aunt of mine, living in this house, was taken ill about six months ago, and sent for me. I came on to New York, only to find she had died, and left me this house and a very small income. A few days after my arrival here, I received a dispatch from Mark Darrell, saying my father had been killed in an accident. He added that an examination of his accounts showed him to be a bankrupt. Imagine my feelings. See what a dreadful situation I was placed in. With no money or friends, I had to accept his story and remain here, to live as best I could. I wrote to Darrell for the particulars. He answered that he was coming on to this city, and would see me about the matter. Then he kept putting off his visit. I grew suspicious. It occurred to me that he had killed my father to rob him. But I could not do anything to verify this idea. Then, to-night's adventure trans-

pired; and, as you know, it led me to believe that Darrell wanted to put me out of the way, so I could not contest his claim on my father's share in that copper mine they owned jointly."

The Bradys glanced at each other significantly, and smiled.

Finally Young King Brady, as Harry was sometimes known, said:

"Your suspicions were correct, Miss Ray."

"As it seems that you two gentlemen know something about this unfortunate affair," said the girl, anxiously, "I would be very grateful if you would tell me what there is behind all this horrible mystery."

"We learned the inside facts in the case to-night, from the burglar we mentioned before," replied Harry, "and we will give you the details which go to make up the missing links in the story you have just told us."

"It will relieve my suspense if you will," said the girl.

"Then listen, and you will see how strangely the exposition of this case came about. Some time ago this country was flooded with counterfeit Canadian coins. They were fine imitations, for they were made of real silver. The only difference between them and genuine money was that the counterfeits were very much lighter in weight. The counterfeiters calculated to give about twenty cents' worth of silver for fifty cents, in the form of these spurious coins."

"That was a very clever scheme."

"Yes, but the Treasury Department discovered the trick, and we were detailed to run down the counterfeiters, if possible, and break up the gang. After a while we became convinced that the crooked work was done on the American side of the frontier. Our investigations led us to Montana. There we finally learned that a burglar named Barney Green was working with the gang. He learned that we were after him and fled. Concluding that we could learn who his pals were, if we could nab him, we started on his trail. He led us a chase back to New York. Here we lost him. He was dead broke. To relieve his fortune, he attempted to rob a bank in Harlem. A policeman shot him. We got wind of his identity, and went to the hospital to look over the wounded burglar. As we suspected, he was Barney Green. We found the man in a dying condition."

"But what has all this got to do with me?" asked Nellie.

"Everything, as you will soon find out."

"Go on with your story, Mr. Brady."

"Well," continued Harry, "Green recognized us. Knowing he was dying, he admitted his guilt, told us who the members of the gang were, and explained where we could find the counterfeiting mint. He was actuated by revenge on his pals, for not one of them offered to give him a helping hand when they learned that we were after him. The leader of the gang, he told us, was no one but Mark Darrell, your father's business partner."

"What! Can it be possible?" gasped Nellie, in astonishment.

"Yes, it's a fact. Barney Green was particularly mad at Darrell. In a fit of rage he told us that he had seen Darrell murder Philip Ray, and told us where the body of your

father was hidden. When the villain killed your father, he produced forged bills of sale, whereby Mr. Ray was supposed to have transferred to him all his interest in their copper mine. This was done in order to swindle you out of your inheritance. And the villain came on here with the evident purpose of killing you to prevent any legal action being taken against him to make him give you your father's interest in that valuable business."

"Then my theory was correct?" asked Nellie.

"Perfectly," Harry answered, with a nod. "There can be no question about it. We secured Barney Green's sworn affidavit, covering all the facts I have just related, before he died in the hospital."

"And now?"

"Now we are going back to Montana to capture Darrell and his gang of counterfeiters. Incidentally, we intend to force that villain to show his hand, and make over to you your father's share in the copper mine."

"How kind of you."

"It will be a pleasure to us to do so, for it will put an end to the counterfeiting."

"How can it, Mr. Brady?" asked Nellie, in puzzled tones.

"Simply because the silver from which the counterfeits are coined comes from your father's mine. In fact, that mine was first thought to be a silver mine, and they worked it for the silver it contained, until they struck the streak of copper and found it the more valuable of the two ores to get out."

"I see."

"Now, in order to protect your interests in Montana, you had better be there when we return to Butte City. And we shall probably take you with us to identify your father's remains. Will you go?"

"With pleasure."

"Very well. You can begin your preparations at once, for we are apt to depart any day, now. In fact, there is nothing to keep us here now, except to run down Mark Darrell. In the meantime, if you receive any more anonymous notes, pay no attention to them, for that villain may make another attempt to put you out of the way, if he gets a chance."

The Bradys then left the girl, and went downtown toward Secret Service headquarters, to report to their chief all that had happened.

But they did not reach the office that night.

An incident occurred which changed their plans at once.

While riding on a Madison avenue car, they passed a coupe going in the same direction they were pursuing, and glancing in the window, Harry caught a view of Mark Darrell sitting in the vehicle, smoking a cigar.

"By Jove, there's our man now!" exclaimed the boy, squeezing his partner's arm and pointing at the carriage.

Old King Brady gazed intently at the driver of the equipage.

Then he turned to Harry and said:

"Now I can understand why it was that driver so rudely watched Darrell trying to kill that girl. According to Bar-

ney Green's description, he must be Tim Golden, one of Darrell's gang."

"We can easily prove that when we arrest them," replied Harry. "It is now imperative to keep that carriage in view. We must not lose sight of them for an instant, until we get the villains located in their residence."

"They must know us by sight. We must change our appearance, Harry. That will give us a chance to get in the range without scaring them."

"As there isn't a soul in this car but ourselves, we can make the change here," replied the boy. "The conductor won't bother us any."

The Bradys were furnished with reversible suits, and other necessities for disguising themselves at a moment's notice.

They therefore made an immediate and startling change in their appearance.

When Harry finished, he was clad as a bicyclist, and wore a false mustache.

Old King Brady made a more radical change, for he swiftly made his costume turn into a military uniform, and wore a red wig and side whiskers.

Their felt hats were rolled up and put in their pockets.

The conductor gazed in at them in astonishment, but made no comment.

Watching the coupe, they saw it turn into Forty-second street after the car, and just before reaching the Park avenue tunnel the detectives alighted.

Gliding over to the drug store on the corner, they went in, and watched the oncoming coupe through the glass doors.

The carriage pulled up before the Grand Union Hotel.

Darrell alighted and went into the building, and Tim Golden drove away.

"I'll shadow Darrell. You keep the carriage in view," said Old King Brady.

"Very well. I'll meet you later in the hotel lobby," Harry answered.

They left the drug store together.

While Old King Brady went over to the hotel, the boy pursued the carriage down to Lexington avenue, and saw it turn into a livery stable.

"It's a hired rig, after all," thought the young detective.

He saw Golden give the suit of livery he wore to the stable man, and receive a black coat and derby hat in exchange.

The man then left the stable, and Harry followed him back to the hotel.

"All his disguising to look like a coachman was useless, for we baffled them finely," chuckled the boy, as he went along after his man.

Upon Golden's arrival at the hotel, he went to the clerk and asked for his key.

"Your friend just got it and went up to the room," said the clerk.

"What number was the apartment—I forgot it!" asked Golden.

"Room 305, on the third floor, sir."

"Thank you. I'll go up in the elevator."

Harry heard what was said.

Watching the villain, he saw Golden go upstairs.

The next moment Old King Brady glided over to his young partner.

"We've got them located," he whispered. "Let's go right up and nab them in their room. There won't be much chance for them to escape us now."

Harry nodded, and a minute later they ascended to the third floor in an elevator.

CHAPTER III.

CAUGHT ON THE RAILROAD.

"You can't go up to any of the guests' rooms until you send up your cards, gentlemen," said one of the porters, touching Old King Brady's arm and detaining them.

The detectives paused with a feeling of chagrin.

It was their plan to take the villains by surprise.

Such a course was now out of the question, however.

A thoughtful look crossed Old King Brady's face, and he finally said:

"Very well, if that's your rule. Send up my card."

He approached the office counter, picked up a blank card, and wrote on it:

"CAPTAIN BAT MASTERS, Butte, Montana."

A bell-boy was sent up with the card, and the detectives waited.

"I've given the name of one of Darrell's gang," whispered the veteran.

"Won't the rascal become suspicious of one of his men following him here?"

"It would be apt to alarm him, or arouse his curiosity."

"Then we are sure of an audience."

"My dear boy, that's just why I used that name."

In a few minutes the boy returned and said:

"Mr. Darrell will be right down."

The officers nodded, and the boy walked away.

They watched every one who came down in the elevators, and a quarter of an hour slipped by without either of the villains putting in an appearance.

It made the Bradys impatient.

When another fifteen minutes passed by without their men coming down, the detectives' suspicions became aroused, and Harry muttered:

"I'm afraid they suspect danger."

"We must go up and find out," said Old King Brady, with determination.

He approached the clerk, showed his badge and said hurriedly:

"You've got to let us go up to Darrell's room. That man is a criminal we are after, and he has failed to respond to our requests to see him. It's my impression he has skipped, and you'll lose your board bill if he has."

The clerk looked worried, and exclaimed:

"Go ahead up, by all means."

The Bradys ascended to the third floor, and looked at the door of room 306.

Receiving no response, they pushed open the door and entered.

There was no one in the room, and a window opening on a fire-escape on the Forty-second street side stood wide open.

"Our birds have flown!" exclaimed the old detective, in disgust.

"And there's how they got away," added Harry, pointing at the open window.

"What could have scared them off?"

"See the note stuck on the bureau mirror?"

Old King Brady frowned with annoyance, strode across the room, and snatching a sheet of note paper down from the glass, he read these words written upon it:

"Captain Bat Masters died before I left Butte City."

Old King Brady looked dismayed.

"I've made a serious blunder," he exclaimed, handing the note to Harry.

"Well, I should say you had," laughed the boy. "If this is true, it's no wonder they were suspicious and skipped. All we can do now is to trace them."

"Did they leave any baggage here?"

"None that I can see," replied the boy, looking around the room.

"Follow me down the fire-escape."

They descended, and dropped from the lowest platform into the street.

Observing a cabman standing close by laughing at them, Harry asked him:

"What are you grinning at?"

"Sure, it's a foine way yez have av baitin' the hotel out av a board bill," the cabby chuckled. "An' this makes four av yez. Is there anny more?"

"What do you mean by four of us?"

"Didn't yer two friends come out ther same way half an hour ago?"

"Oh, you saw them then, did you?"

"I did, bedad, an' it's off they must be on a Cintral thrain be this toime."

"Did they go over to the depot?"

"Make belave yer don't know it, ye villain!"

"Then we'll follow them."

And away dashed the Bradys, followed by a roar of laughter from the cabman, who mistook them for a gang of hotel beats.

Upon reaching the Grand Central, the detectives rushed into the waiting room, intending to find out what had become of Darrell and his companion.

The ticket window was open, and Harry asked the agent:

"Have any trains gone out in the past half hour?"

"No, sir; but the Albany Express leaves in three minutes."

"Do you recollect two men buying tickets here a while ago?"

"Describe them."

Harry complied.

When he finished, the agent said:

"I remember them. They bought tickets for Albany."

"Then they must be on the train which is to go now?"

"Perhaps. You might find out by going through the cars."

The Bradys nodded, hurried to the door, showed their badges to the gateman, and made a rush to catch the train, which was just starting.

As they landed panting on the rear platform of the last car, they caught a view of Mark Darrell looking out at them through the glass door.

He eyed them keenly a moment, and his hand flew to the latch.

The villain had been watching everybody who boarded the train.

As these men were the only two who arrived together, and he was watching for a pair of men who might be pursuing him, he became suspicious of them at once.

No sooner were they on the car than he vanished.

"Did you see Darrell at the door?" panted Harry.

"Yes, and he looked as if he suspected us," Old King Brady replied.

"Come in. He wouldn't dare jump off going at this speed."

"Watch a few minutes first."

"You take that side and I'll watch this."

Leaping out, they kept a keen glance fixed on the train ahead, but failed to see their men making any effort to alight.

In a few minutes the cars were going so fast that they knew the fugitives would not dare to attempt to jump off in the tunnel they were passing through.

Then they got up off the side steps.

"We needn't hurry," Old King Brady commented. "They can't get away now."

"Darrell could not have recognized us in these disguises as his assailants at Central Park, when he was attacking Nellie Ray," said Harry.

"He will know it though, in a few minutes," was the grim reply.

As Old King Brady spoke he seized the door knob and attempted to enter the car.

But to his surprise he found the door was locked.

"Darrell has fastened the latch!" he exclaimed.

Harry gave a whistle of surprise.

"That shows plainly that he suspected us," was his comment.

"How can we get in? There isn't a soul in this car whom we could attract by kicking at the door, and it won't do to smash the glass."

Harry glanced around in some dismay.

Finally, however, he saw a way out of the difficulty.

"It's risky," he muttered, "but if you'll boost me up, I'll try to get over the roof and reach the forward platform. Then I'll come back and open the door for you."

The expression on Old King Brady's face brightened up.

"Just the plan!" he exclaimed. "Get up on the guard-rail."

Harry seized one of the upright iron bars and swung himself up.

The apron of the roof slanted down steeply, and offered

him no hold, but when the old detective went to his assistance, he finally got upon it and reached the roof.

A strong draught was flying by him, as the train rushed along, but the boy crept on his hands and knees, and reached the forward end of the car without danger. It was an easy matter to slide down on the front rail and thence to the platform.

Here he rested a few moments.

Then he passed into the car and admitted Old King Brady.

"It's all right now," he commented.

"I feared you would break your neck. Come up forward now."

They passed through the rumbling cars, scrutinizing every one, and reached the forward smoker without seeing any sign of the escaping pair.

"Looks as if they were trying to hide from us," chuckled Old King Brady.

"What good will it do them? We are bound to nab them in the long run."

"Of course; but a crook hates to give in without a fight."

"They ain't here. Let's try the baggage compartment?"

Passing through the door into the dimly lighted place, they saw no one there, until suddenly Darrell and his pal sprang from behind a pile of trunks.

The former aimed a pistol at Old King Brady, and the latter covered Harry.

"Are you following us?" hissed Darrell, in threatening tones.

Neither of the detectives lost their nerve for an instant, although they knew that these desperate ruffians would not hesitate to shoot them.

The old detective smiled blandly, and nodded his head.

"Yes, Darrell," he replied, in cool tones. "We want you badly for counterfeiting, on suspicion of murdering your business partner, and for your murderous assault upon Nellie Ray. Put up your gun, old man, for if you shoot us it will go all the harder with you."

The villain had a worried look on his face.

It only took him a moment to arrive at a conclusion, and he said:

"You quit this car right away. We've got the drop on you, and we ain't going to take any nonsense, either. Get out the way you came in. If you don't we'll instantly kill you!"

There was no mistaking the terrible earnestness of his words.

As the Bradys dared not draw their weapons, they felt that they were at the mercy of the ruffians, and could gain nothing by resisting.

"Very well, we'll go," said Old King Brady, quietly: "but you are only gaining a short respite. We are bound to take you anyway before you leave this train."

"Go, and go blamed quick, too!" roared Darrell, with a scowl.

The detectives said no more, but retreated into the smoker so they could get out their revolvers, and the door banged shut after them.

CHAPTER IV.

OFF FOR MONTANA.

"Thunder! What's that jarring, Harry?"

"Isn't the train slackening speed?"

"Yes, and I'm blest if I can hear the puffing of the locomotive."

"Got your revolver handy?"

"I'm ready to go in after them."

The detectives were gripping their pistols now.

Expecting a life or death fight, they flung open the door, dashed into the baggage car, and shot a keen glance around.

The two villains were gone.

Moreover, they now saw through the open front door that the locomotive had vanished.

As they rushed out on the forward platform, they observed the engine far ahead, leaving them behind very rapidly, and Harry panted:

"The villains have uncoupled the tender from the train. By threatening the engineer and fireman with their guns, they are compelling them to drive the locomotive ahead at top speed, so they can escape."

"What a desperate pair!" involuntarily exclaimed Old King Brady. "They have given us the slip very cleverly now. We can't hope to overtake them. Ah, here comes the conductor."

"Great Scott, what does this mean?" demanded the railroad man, as he joined them and gazed blankly after the disappearing locomotive.

The Bradys told him.

He was amazed, and expressed himself very forcefully.

Nothing could be done, however, to remedy the matter.

A brakeman was sent back with a red signal light to prevent a rear end collision with any train that might be following them.

The cars finally stopped, and then all hands were kept busy explaining matters to the alarmed passengers.

They were going to cut the telegraph wires and send word back to the depot of what had happened, when they saw the runaway locomotive coming back toward them rapidly.

"How peculiar!" Old King Brady exclaimed, as he pointed at it.

"I hope the engineer got the best of them!" Harry muttered.

When the engine backed up to them, the engineer shouted to the conductor:

"Sam, we were held up by two men with guns, who uncoupled us from the train. They made us carry them ten miles ahead. There we had to stop. They alighted and escaped, so we came back flying, to pick you up again."

"Any harm done?" demanded the conductor.

"None to us."

"Hook her up again."

"Drop us off where they alighted," said Harry, "and we'll try to catch them."

"Very well, sir," replied the engineer.

In a few minutes the train was coupled to the locomotive, and the trip was continued at a high rate of speed.

They let the Bradys off the cars, and the train went on.

At a near-by local depot, the officers discovered that the two fugitives had been seen lurking around the depot.

As nothing could be seen of them then, the detectives were reluctantly compelled to abandon the hunt and return to New York on the next train.

Completely tired out, they went home and to bed.

On the following afternoon they proceeded to headquarters, and meeting their chief in his office, they gave him an account of all that had happened.

He was deeply impressed by what they said.

At the conclusion of their story, he remarked:

"I'm glad Barney Green gave his pals away before he died, for I'm anxious to see that slick counterfeiting game ended. The coins that gang made are finding their way to New York. The country is being flooded with them. It is getting very alarming. I've received many complaints already about those light-weight coins. Will you try to break up that gang?"

"We shall have to go to Montana to do so."

"Very well. Go, by all means."

"And that will involve us in Nellie Ray's case."

"So much the better. If she has been swindled, you may force her enemy to make restitution. If her father was murdered, capture his slayer, prove his guilt and see that the ends of justice are served."

"As we shall need the girl's evidence, we must take her with us."

"By all means. With all his financial interests located in Montana, it isn't likely that Darrell will remain here very long. More than likely his only object in coming East was to put that girl out of his way. When he finds she is no longer here, he is likely to return to his mines."

"In the meantime," said Harry eagerly, "we can be smashing his gang, and when he comes back, we will have them bagged and pounce on him."

"You will, if you are lucky," laughed the chief. "He's evidently a bad man. I fear you will have a great deal of trouble with him, and find yourselves placed in constant danger while trying to capture him."

"We don't fear to assume the risk, chief."

"Certainly you don't. I never saw two rasher, pluckier, or more daring fellows than you are when it comes to facing dangers."

The Bradys laughed.

When the details were completed, they went out.

The dusk of twilight had settled down upon the city by this time.

"Let us go to see Miss Ray first," suggested Old King Brady.

"She should be given notice to get ready," Harry assented.

"They proceeded uptown, discussing their plans, little suspecting what a shock was awaiting them, to upset all their calculations.

Upon reaching Nellie's house they rang the bell.

No one answered their repeated summons, and Old King Brady muttered:

"She must have gone out."

"But the servant ought to be home."

"Shall I ring again?"

"No. Hark! What's that noise?"

They listened intently.

A deep, muffled groan reached their ears.

It seemed to come from within the house.

"Somebody in distress," Old King Brady exclaimed.

"The sound comes from within the hall," said Harry, listening at the key-hole.

"See if the door is fastened."

"It's locked."

"Then burst it open."

"Help me."

Putting their shoulders against it, they pushed heavily.

With a crash the lock broke, and the door flew wide open.

The Bradys were precipitated into the gloomy hall, and regaining their balance, they stood up and heard the groans quite close at hand.

"It's a female voice," said the old detective.

"And in this hall, beyond question," Harry added.

Taking a match from his pocket, the old detective lit the gas.

When the light flared up, they saw Nellie's maid, bound and gagged, tied to the banisters, groaning with all her strength.

The sight startled them.

"Old King Brady, there's been foul play here."

"That's evident, Harry. Who could be at the bottom of it?"

"It isn't hard to guess. If the servant is tied, what has happened to Nellie?"

With their fears aroused, they released the girl, and she burst into tears, and holding her handkerchief to her eyes, she cried:

"Oh, I am so glad you heard me and came in. I'd about given up all hope. Now I feel safer. I've been there all day long."

"Who did it?"

"Mark Darrell and his friend."

"And your mistress—where is she?"

"Drugged and carried away by those two villains."

"When did this occur?"

"At nine o'clock this morning."

The Bradys glanced at each other meaningly.

"So they came back to accomplish their purpose," Harry muttered.

"We must get the details, follow them, and rescue that girl, if they have not already carried out their fiendish scheme."

Harry nodded and asked the girl:

"Won't you tell us what occurred here?"

"There ain't much to tell," replied the girl. "This morning I let two men in, and as soon as the door closed, they knocked me down, bound and gagged me, and tied me where you found me. Miss Nellie, alarmed at the noise, came

down to find out what it was all about, and they poured on her and drugged her with chloroform. 'We'll pretend she's an invalid,' said the one she called Darrell; 'and carry her away to Montana with us. If we have a good chance on the way, we'll put her where she'll do no harm.' They had a cab, carried her hat and coat out with her, locked the door, and they all drove away. I've been here ever since, expecting to starve to death."

The Bradys questioned her further.

She was then given some instructions, and they hurried away.

With an hour they had learned that Darrell and Tim had taken the girl away to Chicago on the Erie road.

They then telegraphed the facts ahead to the authorities at several cities along the route, and packing a grip left New York.

As they sped away over the rails that night, Harry said:

"We may have them intercepted and arrested. In fact, it is not possible for the villains to get the drugged girl all the way to Butte City without interference from the authorities."

"There is only this danger," answered Old King Brady, in grave tones, "a good opportunity may present itself for those villains to murder the girl on the way to Chicago. And if they get the chance, I am sure they'll do it."

CHAPTER V.

THE UNLUCKY INDIAN.

On the following day the Bradys reached Buffalo, and were met in the depot by a Secret Service detective, with whom they were acquainted.

"I've been on the lookout here for Darrell, his pal, and the abducted girl," he said to the Bradys, "but the villains gave me the slip."

"How did it happen?" asked Harry curiously.

"The train they came here on was a through express, and made no stops. I was detained till the time it was due to arrive. When I got here, I found that the cars came in ten minutes ahead of time. The passengers were all gone."

"How unfortunate!"

"Couldn't be helped, though."

"Did you find out anything about them?"

"Yes. They had the girl with them."

"That's lucky. We feared they might murder her on the road."

"Well, they went away in a cab, and I found they'd gone on to Chicago."

"Do you know whether the girl was still drugged?"

"My informant told me she slept all the way, and was only half conscious when they took her away in the cab. They pretended she was Darrell's invalid sister."

"What's become of them?"

"They went to Chicago, but don't dare to leave there

quently, as they've learned somehow that we are on the watch for them," said the detective.

"Well, that's a point in our favor."

"Going on to run them down?"

"By all means."

"I wish you luck."

The Bradys left him and continued their trip.

When they reached Chicago, they called on the chief of that branch of the Secret Service, and learned that Darrell and the others were still at large.

An army of officers were guarding every avenue of escape from the city to prevent them getting away, but nothing had yet been seen of the trio. It was known that they had landed, and were in the depot.

There all trace of them was lost.

"It's queer where they so suddenly and mysteriously disappeared," said the chief, in puzzled tones. "I can't make it out at all. But I could almost swear that they have not left the city yet. I've got men all over on the watch."

"Was any effort made to trace them from the depot?"

"Yes, indeed. But no one seems to have seen them, and all the usual hackmen denied that they had carried them away."

Old King Brady smiled and said:

"You only examined the exits followed by the passengers, did you?"

"Of course. Where else could we have looked?"

"Out the back way through the railroad yards, of course."

"We didn't do that. It didn't seem natural that they'd go out that way."

"You are wrong, sir. Well knowing the police might be watching the front doors for them, they would naturally go in exactly the opposite direction."

"If they did, they've fooled us then."

"We'll test our theory to-morrow."

They finally departed, and put up at a good hotel.

Next day they proceeded to the railroad depot, got out in the yards, and after making some inquiries among the men, they finally met an old switchman who claimed to have seen the trio.

He told them where they had gone.

Following this clew, the detectives began to hunt.

Clew after clew was found, leading them to an Italian quarter near by the yards.

Here they finally met an old junkman who declared that he had seen the trio enter a little brown house he pointed out to them.

The Bradys learned that the owner of the place was a man of evil reputation, but that did not deter them from knocking at his door.

It was the owner of the place who opened the door, and before he had a chance to ask what they wanted, the Bradys pushed past him into the hall.

The click of Old King Brady's revolver caused him to recoil, and his yellow face turned pale when the old detective demanded sharply:

"Where is Darrell?"

"Me nots know."

"Then you are my prisoner."

"Ave Maria!" yelled the Italian.

And overcome with fear, he suddenly dashed out the door and ran away.

The old detective burst out laughing, and said to Young King Brady:

"We've seared him away."

"Let's search the roost before he returns."

"Keep your gun ready for action, Harry."

"You look over this floor, and I'll go upstairs."

Old King Brady nodded and disappeared through a doorway, while the boy ascended to the floor above and passed into the rear room.

As he did so he heard a hoarse voice yell:

"By thunder, here's the detectives!"

"Run!" roared another voice.

Bang! went a pistol in the gloom, and the boy barely had time to catch a glimpse of two shadowy figures, when a bullet grazed his skull.

He fell to the floor half stunned, shouting:

"Old King Brady, come this way, quick!"

Crash! went a window open, out sprang Darrell and Golden to the roof of an extension, and Old King Brady came rushing upstairs thoroughly alarmed.

"What's the matter? What's the matter here?" he demanded, breathlessly.

Harry made no reply.

The boy's senses were nearly gone.

Old King Brady lit a match and saw his pupil.

Igniting the gas, he rushed to Harry's side and examined him.

The wound on the side of Harry's head was trifling, yet he saw that it was quite severe enough to deprive the young detective of his senses.

"Some one shot him. I heard the report," muttered the old officer in angry tones. "But it isn't serious, thank heaven, and I'll soon revive him."

He drew some water from a sink-faucet and bathed the boy's head so effectually that Young King Brady revived, and gasped:

"Was it a bad wound?"

"No. Only skin deep."

"Where's Darrell and Golden?"

"Were they here?"

"Yes. I think they went for that rear window."

"I'll examine it."

He thrust out his head and saw the extension, and a ladder leading down to the yard. Then he joined the boy and said:

"They've got away by the rear. How are you now?"

"Better. Got a headache. Tie my handkerchief over the wound."

This was done, and the boy got upon his feet.

Just then they heard a slight noise in the adjoining room, and rushed in.

There, sitting in a chair bound and gagged, and fast asleep, was Nellie Ray!

To release her was but the work of a moment.

"She has been drugged again," Old King Brady commented, as he viewed her.

"We'd better get her out of this den."

"Go after a carriage. I'll carry her downstairs."

Harry hastened away.

By the time Old King Brady had the senseless girl out upon the sidewalk, the boy came back with a hack, and they got in with their burden.

She was driven to the hotel, and a room secured for her.

Harry summoned a doctor, and Old King Brady hurried away to notify the authorities that they had driven the fugitives from cover.

The girl quickly revived under medical treatment.

She was bewildered when she learned where she was, but her delight knew no bounds upon learning that the Bradys were with her.

She told a story of the abduction which agreed with what her maid said.

On the following day the Bradys provided her with money to procure some necessary clothing, and started to hunt for Darrell and Golden.

Several days passed by, during which Chicago was fairly scoured by the police and detectives. But no trace of the fugitives was found.

They had dropped completely out of sight.

Finding it was useless to remain there any longer, at the end of the week the Bradys and the girl resumed their trip to Montana.

When Butte City was reached, they found it to be a mining city of some importance, and left Nellie at a good hotel, under an assumed name.

She was told to keep under cover as much as possible, for fear her enemies might locate her, and cause her more trouble.

The detectives then went out to get a couple of saddle horses to carry them out to the Jolly Joker copper mine, which was far from the city.

A miner they met directed them to a stable down an unsavory by-street, where they could get a good pair of bays, and they proceeded toward the place.

As they were passing a dingy saloon on a corner, they were startled to hear angry voices coming from within, and a voice they recognized yelled furiously:

"You dirty, copper-colored dog, I'll knock your head off. Take that!"

A shower of whacks was heard, then a series of wild yells.

"You kill Red Buck!" cried the poor wretch.

"I'll tear you to pieces," shouted the first speaker, furiously.

Harry grasped his companion's arm.

"That's Darrell!" he exclaimed.

"I recognized the tones. Follow me in."

They rushed into the saloon, which was crowded with a rough gang of sports, miners, gamblers and crooks of various kinds.

In the midst of this crowd an Indian lay on the floor, and Mark Darrell, pale with rage, was furiously beating the poor wretch with a big club.

Rushing forward and scattering the crowd by flashing his pistol, Old King Brady confronted the villain, and shouted sternly:

"Leave that poor fellow alone, you brute, or I'll shoot you!"

"Old King Brady!" gasped Darrell, staggering back in alarm.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORGED NOTE.

Mark Darrell dropped the club with which he had been beating the Indian, and an expression of intense horror overspread his face.

Old King Brady's revolver was aimed square at the man's eye, and he said:

"We've been looking for you a long time, Darrell, and we've found you at last. Raise your hands now, old fellow, or you'll go to your own funeral!"

The mine owner silently obeyed.

He was trembling like an aspen by this time.

As he glanced around the bar-room, and saw how all his cronies had deserted him, a feeling of intense bitterness assailed the man, and he muttered:

"Cowards! They've left me in trouble."

"That's what you and your gang did to Barney Green, and caused him to give away all he knew about you out of revenge," said Old King Brady.

A look of intelligence flashed over Darrell's face.

"So that's how you found out, eh?" he demanded.

"Yes. We've got Barney's sworn affidavit against you."

"Curse him!" hissed Darrell, vindictively.

"You gave us the slip very cleverly, but it did you no good."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the villain, savagely.

He was looking past the Bradys and their weapons.

Coming in were many of his friends, who by this time had recovered from their first panic of alarm, and every one clutching a missile in his hand.

The prostrate Indian saw them.

"Look out!" he yelled warningly.

But before the detectives had time to get out of the way, a shower of various kinds of objects were hurled at them by the gang.

Glasses, bottles, stones and furniture flew through the air in a shower, and an earthen cuspidor hit Old King Brady in the back and knocked him down half stunned.

The lamps were struck, and went jingling to the floor, and in the gloom that settled down came the crash of broken mirrors, the hanging of objects against the wall and the bar, and a chorus of yells from the gang as they rushed forward with drawn weapons.

Harry was struck in a dozen places.

Realizing what was happening, he jumped behind a heap of beer kegs.

From here he began to discharge his revolver toward the ruffians.

Shot after shot rang out, mingling with howls of pain and alarm, and the patter of flying footsteps in full retreat.

When the lights went out the place became very dark.

"Old King Brady!" called the boy.

"Where are you, Harry?"

"Behind the kegs."

"I'll strike a light."

"Don't you do it," implored the Indian, in alarm.

"Why not?" asked the old detective, in surprise.

"Because they'll come in and see you. Most of them belong to Darrell's gang, and to defend him they'll kill you, as sure as fate."

"Oh, we don't fear them," carelessly said the detective.

And he lit a match and held it up.

When his glance swept around the room, he saw that the saloon had been absolutely wrecked by the gang.

Not a whole piece of glassware remained.

The mirrors and bottles were broken, the bar and walls were smashed, the floor was littered with the debris of the oil lamps, furniture was overturned and destroyed, and the pictures lay splintered on the floor.

"Not one of the crowd here," said the old detective.

"Even the bartender is gone, and the place looks as if a cyclone had struck it."

"Get away as fast as you can!" urged the Indian. "It's too dangerous to stay here now. Follow me, and I'll show you the way out by a rear exit. They'll be laying for you in the street."

"We don't wish to run away from them," retorted Old King Brady, whose temper was aroused. "On the contrary, we want to meet them badly. It was not only to save you from getting a beating that we tackled him. We are Government officers, and wish to arrest Darrell and his gang."

"I'm grateful for what you did for me, just the same," said the Indian, feelingly, "and I'll do 'most anything to show it."

"We may accept your offer some time. Why was he beating you?"

"Because," said the Indian with a scowl, "I refused to give him my good money for his Canadian counterfeits. It made him so mad at me that he snatched my money out of my hand. When I tried to get it back, he picked up a club and began to pound me. I'll get even with him for that yet."

"Do you know where his copper mine is?"

"Yes. Its location has always been kept a secret, but I've seen it."

"Can you guide us to it?"

"I can and will. I am a professional guide."

"Well, come. We will get out of here. You stand by us now, Red Buck, and we'll pay you well for your services."

"I have no gun."

"Here's one of mine."

As he handed it to the Flathead Indian, they sallied into the street, and saw some of their enemies on the other corner.

Several shots were exchanged, doing no damage on either side, and then the Bradys charged on the ruffians.

They fled in all directions.

Having put them to flight, and failing to see Darrell among them, the detectives paused and Old King Brady cried:

"Let them go, they're a pack of cowards!"

"Where you going now?" asked Red Buck.

"To get a couple of horses. Have you got one?"

"Yes. Are you going to start to-day?"

"No, to-morrow morning."

The pistol shots had attracted a number of people to the spot, and the Bradys showed their badges, explained matters and went away with the Indian.

Two good saddle horses and a number of necessary articles were procured before the Bradys returned to their hotel for supper.

"Red Buck promised to be on hand in the morning," said Harry, "and it's a lucky thing for us we met him, as it will save us a lot of trouble to have him with us. But we'll have to leave Nellie behind."

"I know it, and regret it," said Old King Brady. "It isn't safe to leave her here; but it can't be helped. She may be found by either Darrell or some of his gang during our absence, and they may cause her trouble."

"She has got friends here to whom she can go."

"Very true; but as Darrell fears her, he would not leave a stone unturned to put her out of his way, if he got a chance to do so without fear of exposure and punishment."

Leaving their room and going to the dining room, they glanced around at the other guests in quest of the girl.

She was not among them.

"Queer she isn't down yet," commented Old King Brady, uneasily.

"Oh, she may not feel well after the tiresome journey, and may have remained in her room," replied Harry, carelessly.

They finished their supper in silence.

When they arose from the table, Old King Brady said:

"I'm going up to her room to have a talk with her. She must be warned to be particularly careful during our absence."

"She's in No. 29," said Harry.

Going up to the room in question, they rapped for admittance.

Receiving no response, they pushed open the door and entered.

The apartment was vacant.

"She must have gone out, and hasn't returned yet," said Harry.

Old King Brady looked very uneasy, and his keen glance swept around the room taking everything in very carefully.

An open letter lay on the bed, and he picked it up and read it aloud.

It said in type-written words:

"Miss Ray—Come down to the post-office at once. Got important news.
OLD KING BRADY."

The detectives' glances met.

They understood immediately what the note signified.

"It's a rank forgery. I didn't write or send it," said Old King Brady.

"Darrell must have found out that she was here, and sent it to lure her into his power again," was Harry's conclusion.

"Of course. And knowing, as he does, that we are hot on his trail, he won't lose any time about killing the poor girl now."

"Let's find out more about the note, and try to run him down."

"Descending to the office, Old King Brady asked the clerk:

"When did this note come in for Miss Ray?"

"While you gentlemen were dressing for supper," replied the clerk, promptly.

"Do you hear that, Harry? He must have tracked us here and seen her."

"No doubt," answered the boy. "Who brought the note in?"

"A messenger boy."

"Did you see Miss Ray go out?"

"Just a few moments after the boy was gone she came down with her hat on, and hurried off with a very anxious look upon her face."

"Did she leave any word for any one?"

"No, sir," replied the clerk, shaking his head.

"You don't know which way she went, I suppose?"

"I didn't pay any attention to her after she passed out the door."

The detectives thanked him and hurried out.

The post-office was not far away. With an anxious feeling of mind, they hastened toward it, determined to find out, if possible, what had become of Nellie Ray.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOLLY JOKER MINE.

"Yes," said a man to whom Old King Brady spoke, near the post-office, "I seen a gal like ther one yer jist described, stranger, an' she nigh got me inter trouble, too."

"How did that happen?" asked Old King Brady, interestedly.

"Waal, when she come along, a gang o' no-good loafers pounced on her, an' afore she could help herself, she wuz tied an' chucked on a horse. I jumped in on 'em, ter help her, but they galloped away wi' ther gal. I chased 'em out on ther Silver Bow trail, an' when we got out aways, they begun ter fire at me. I had ter run fer my life, or I'd a gone under, sure!"

"Did they say anything in your hearing?"

"My, yes. Ther leader wuz a mighty stocky man, with a close-trimmed gray beard, a sharp nose an' deep-set eyes. 'We've got her again,' I heerd him say. 'She fell in the trap easy. Once we git her out ter ther Jolly Joker, she's safe,' an' with a laugh he galloped away."

"That's Darrell!" muttered Harry.

"Which way does the trail lead?" asked the old detective.

"Toward ther Buckles."

"How many were there in the gang?"

"Should jedge about twenty."

"And no one interfered but you?"

"No. They all carried guns—that kep' people off."

"It's evident that they are carrying the girl away to Darrell's mine," said the old detective after a moment's thought.

"Confound him," Harry exclaimed angrily. "He has done the very trick we most wished to avoid."

"We must set out on their trail to-night, Harry."

"Then I'll go after Red Buck."

"Meantime, I'll get the horses and our effects."

Thanking the man for his information, they hastened away.

By the time Old King Brady had the team ready, Harry reached the hotel with the Indian guide, who rode a mustang.

"I've offered to pay the Flathead well if he sticks to us," said the boy.

"Quite right of you," replied Old King Brady, "and so we shall."

"I'd go without pay, after what you did for me," said Red Buck. "I want revenge on Mark Darrell, and I'll have it yet, at any risk."

"Does the Silver Bow trail lead out to his mine?"

"It does. That is, it starts the traveller toward it."

"Then we go that way first?"

"Yes," assented the Indian.

"We must reach the mine just as soon as possible, to prevent any attempt being made to murder the girl."

"Mount, and we'll go at once."

The detectives got astride their horses, and they cantered through the city just as the full moon arose in the cloudless sky.

The city was on the southern slope of the mountains, and contained some foundries, a couple of ore-concentrators, and some quartz mills and smelters, from which a ruddy glow arose to the sky.

As the business of the town was directly connected with silver mining, the population was of that rough class to be found at all mining camps.

The trail led them out upon a broad expanse of rolling country covered with bunch grass and cactus plants.

For miles not a settlement was seen, although they passed belts of pine, fir, cedar and cotton wood trees.

Toward midnight Harry asked the Indian:

"How far is it from Butte to Darrell's mine?"

"About fifty miles," replied Red Buck.

"Are there any other mines near it?"

"None within ten miles. We leave the Beaver Head River behind us at Willow Creek, and strike due west for Burnt Pine in the foothills. The mine lies in a deep valley."

"What's Darrell's object in keeping the location of his mine a secret?"

"First, to prevent a rush. Second, because he's got his counterfeiting mint located there. And third, because he wants no strangers there."

They rode on in silence for a distance.

Arriving at a point where another road branched off, they paused.

"It's a question which way they went," said Old King Brady.

"Wait; I'll find out," said the guide.

He alighted from his pony, and went down on his hands and knees with his eyes close to the ground, closely scanning the trail.

They watched him with deep interest.

Like a snake he went gliding over the ground, reading the signs he saw there as a civilized man reads an open book.

Presently he arose and returned to them.

"It's all right. They left the trail here," he said, in his laconic way.

"Can you trail them?" queried Harry, curiously.

"With ease."

He mounted and took the lead.

The Indian led them off across the plains.

Here they could see the hills and valleys ahead.

It was a matter of surprise to them how he followed the faint trail so accurately, for they could scarcely distinguish a hoof print.

Up to the towering hills they rode.

Then they wound around the spurs, passed through heavy copses of timber land, went down through the valleys and kept on until daybreak.

"Not much further to go now," announced Red Buck finally.

"We'd better pause for breakfast and a few hours rest," suggested Harry. "If we don't, we won't feel much like tackling Darrell in his den."

"They rode all night, too, evidently," said Old King Brady dismounting, "and will be resting when we reach their camp. They won't suspect we are going to beard them in their den, by any means."

There was a tiny mountain brook near by, and as they had plenty of food, they soon had an excellent breakfast before them.

The horses were left to graze the luxuriant vegetation which so abundantly grows in the mountain districts of Montana.

Arranging to get up before noon, they rolled themselves in their blankets and slept.

Feeling very much refreshed when they finally aroused themselves again, they partook of a light luncheon, mounted and rode on again.

In the course of two hours they were swiftly traveling over a section of the country split by huge gorges and gulches.

Ahead the tableland ended abruptly at the edge of a cliff.

"We can't go on this way," said Old King Brady uneasily.

"I don't see why not," replied Red Buck in careless tones.

"Because we'll go over yonder cliff if we keep on."

"Not if our eyes are open," laughed the guide.

"What are you up to, anyway?"

"Going to show you Darrell's mine."

Old King Brady flashed a suspicious glance at the Indian. He began to fear the man was playing him false.

"Indians are treacherous," he thought. "Red Buck may be one of the gang we are after. But Barney Green didn't say so before he died."

The guide said nothing.

He stoically rode ahead to the edge of the precipice and reined in.

As the Bradys came cantering up to him, he pointed down in the valley below.

"You see I have kept my word," said the Indian guide; "there is the mine."

Old and Young King Brady were dumb with astonishment.

And they had cause to be, for down in the valley they saw one of the best equipped mines in the country, having sluices for washing the ore, smelting houses, crushers, concentrators, and, in fact, every modern improvement for mining profitably.

In the big stockade were a score of mounted men in red and blue shirts, whom the Bradys recognized at a glance as Darrell's gang.

They had evidently just come in.

When Harry recovered from his surprise he exclaimed:

"Red Buck, you have kept your word nobly."

"Can't go down there openly," said the Indian. "They'd murder you."

"We don't intend to."

"How you reach the girl then?"

"We intend to disguise ourselves as a couple of miners, and let you pretend to be chasing and shooting at us. You can thus drive us into their camp, and that will be a good excuse for our appearance."

A faint smile crossed the Indian's face.

Nodding his head, he exclaimed:

"Good plan."

"As for you, we expect you to remain about the neighborhood so we can communicate with you occasionally. In the meantime we will lay our plans to save the girl and run away with her."

"Yes, yes," eagerly assented Red Buck.

"Once she is safe, we intend to arrest Darrell and as many of his gang as we can get our hands on after we have a look at his mint."

"That will be my time for vengeance."

"You'll have all the revenge on the man you crave when the right time comes."

The Bradys took a long, careful survey of the mine and its shanties, in which Darrell's men dwelt, and then Harry asked Red Buck:

"Where's the Hermit's Cave?"

"There's ghosts there," said the Indian in alarm.

"Never mind that. We wish to go there. Can you guide us to it?"

"Of course. But I won't go near it. Nobody will. Every one is afraid of the place and shuns it. What do you want to do there?"

"Dig up the body of Philip Ray, whom Darrell mur-

deed to that place, according to a confession made to us by Barney Green before he died."

"Come along, then," said the Indian. "It's up the valley."

And they rode away after the redskin.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PETRIFIED MAN.

"Do you see that rock with bushes around the back up the gulch?"

"Plainly," replied Young King Brady.

"Well," said the Indian, "the entrance to the Hermit's Cave is under that rock. You can find it by parting the bushes where the rock is cracked."

"And you say the cave is haunted by a ghost?"

"It used to be. Several people have seen it, myself included."

"What did the spook look like?"

"The figure of a man draped in a sheet of blue fire."

"Did you shoot at it?"

"I did. But I was so scared I must have missed it. Then I ran for my life."

"What did the ghost do?"

"Groaned and rushed toward me."

"But didn't overtake you, eh?" laughed Harry.

"No," answered Red Buck, in solemn tones. "It's lucky for me it didn't, or I might not now be alive to tell of the adventure."

"Mere superstition," growled Old King Brady. "Come on."

"Not me," said the guide, holding back. "Money couldn't tempt me to go into that cave. And I advise you not to."

"Well you remain here till we come back."

"All right," readily assented the redskin.

The Bradys rode along the rocky bottom of the gulch into which Red Buck had guided them, an hour's travel from the mine.

"Darrell must have haunted the cave for some time after he lured his victim into it and murdered him," commented Harry. "His object most likely was to frighten people away from the place so they would not find the body of Philip Ray and bring the deed home to him."

"It was an easy matter to work upon the superstitious fears of the Indians and uneducated miners who might pass this way," Old King Brady answered. "But ghosts don't go with people of ordinary intelligence. Ah! here's the rock he pointed out."

They dismounted and quickly found the cavern entrance.

It was an uneven aperture in the face of the rock.

Lighting their dark lanterns, they passed into the opening.

Two yards ahead they stepped into a huge cavern, and to their astonishment they observed a big fire burning against the rear wall, under an opening which acted as a door to carry the smoke through the roof.

Scattered about the floor were some blankets, some utensils and other evidences of the place being inhabited by human beings.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Old King Brady, "somebody lives here."

"There isn't a soul in the place now," replied Harry, glancing around.

"Must be the ghost Red Buck spoke of."

"Appears to be a pretty healthy ghost," laughed Harry. "Lives like a human being, too. I wonder where he is?"

"Hark! What's that?"

Old King Brady held up his finger.

A long-drawn, dismal groan reached their ears.

It seemed to proceed from a tunnel in the wall, and as they glanced toward the black aperture they witnessed a startling scene.

A dim bluish light of huge proportions seemed to glow out of the gloom and came gliding forward toward the watching detectives.

The groans now turned into wild shrieks and hideous laughter, followed by several pistol shots in rapid succession. Neither of the detectives moved.

Glancing at each other, they smiled, and Harry said quietly:

"Here comes the ghost."

"But he doesn't seem to scare us."

Just then the fiery object darted from the tunnel and made a rush at the detectives, waving its arms and yelling furiously.

The Bradys eyed it curiously.

Observing that it did not frighten them away, the specter paused.

"Go for him, Harry!" roared Old King Brady.

They leaped forward and the ghost fled precipitately.

It was heading for the tunnel whence it came, but before it got into the opening Harry and his partner pounced on it.

Reaching out their hands, they seized its flowing garments and ripped them off without feeling any burning sensation from the blue fire.

Instead they found it merely a sheet covered with phosphorus.

Old King Brady had the wearer in his grip.

He proved to be a little, old man with long, white hair and a snowy beard, who was clad in a rough suit, a blue flannel shirt, and rawhide boots.

Furiously struggling, he tried to get free, and the old detective cried:

"Keep quiet, Mr. Ghost. I've got you, and you can't get away nohow."

Panting and angry, the old fellow yelled:

"You let me go! You git outter here!"

"Not much," chuckled Old King Brady. "We want an explanation."

"This here is my cave, an' yer ain't wanted. I tell yer."

"Now behave like a gentleman or we'll make a present of you, sir."

The old fellow's temper began to cool.

He sized up the pair sulkily and finally demanded:

"Can't a man live here in peace if he wants ter?"

"Of course he can, if he behaves himself."

"Well, then, I'm behavin', ain't I?"

"Certainly not. You are playing ghost to scare people away. It arouses our curiosity to know what motive prompts you to do this."

"Oh, I've got reasons," said the old man, mysteriously. "I've lived here for some years now, an' they used ter call me ther Hermit. But I didn't want no people comin' around ter pester me, so I took ter playin' off ghost on 'em. It allers worked all right till youse two came along."

"I see. But why this craving for solitude?"

"That's my business!" snapped the old fellow in surly tones.

"We've got to pry into it."

"Yer won't do nuthin' of ther kind."

"Oh, yes, we shall. Say, Harry."

"Well?" asked the boy, with a smile of amusement.

"Go into the tunnel and see what he was doing in there."

"Very well."

"Hey!" yelled the old man frantically. "Don't you dare——"

"Shut up! Go on, Harry."

The boy complied and the old fellow fought and struggled like a madman to break away from the old detective to prevent him.

He was perfectly helpless in the veteran's hands, although he raved, swore and threatened them with all sorts of vengeance.

Presently Young King Brady returned.

He had a smile on his face and a lump of ore in his hand.

"Silver!" he exclaimed, holding it up.

The old man groaned and turned pale with dread.

His jealously guarded secret was now exposed. He feared that the treasure he had found, and had been silently mining for several years past all alone in that wilderness, would be taken from him.

"So that's his secret, eh?" asked Old King Brady.

The old man fell on his knees and gasped beseechingly:

"For pity's sake, don't take it from me!"

"Nonsense! Do you imagine we are thieves?" growled Old King Brady.

The hermit's face brightened up and he cried in glad tones:

"Are you going ter leave a ole man have what's hisn by rights?"

"Of course we are. We haven't any intention of injuring you, old man. We are officers of the law, and came here to find the body of Philip Ray, who was murdered in this cave six months ago by Mark Darrell."

"Oh!" said the hermit eagerly, "perhaps I can help yer."

"Can you?"

"Ay, on condition as yer don't let nobody know I'm working this silver lead. If yer did there'd be a rush for this place, an' I'd be robbed. I've been 'massin a fortune here ter bring home ter civilization with me. I don't want ther result of my hard lab' took from me at ther las' moment."

"We'll protect you if you aid us."

"It's a go. I know all about that murder, too."

"What do you know about it?"

"I'll tell yer. One night while I was a-workin' in ther tunnel a man came in with a rough-looking feller called Barney Green. They talked an' I heard Green say: 'Mr. Ray, I 'speat Mark Darrell here any moment.' The gentleman asked: 'Why did he git yer ter steer me here?' The miner answered: 'He found a copper mine in this cave, an' wants ter show it to yer so ther three of us kin each stake a claim afore it's found out. Wait here. I'll go out an' see if he's comin'.' He went out. A few minutes later a shot came from the entrance. The bullet pierced Mr. Ray's head. He fell dead. Darrell ran in, a smokin' pistol in his hand. To make sure of his work, he fired several more bullets into his vietim. Then he called in Barney Green. They dug a hole in the floor of the cave an' buried their vietim. Then they went away, Darrell sayin: 'Ther Jolly Joker is mine entirely now.'"

"Your story is exactly the same as the confession Green gave us when he was dying," said Old King Brady. "Can you show us the body?"

"I can. I never touched it. Wait—I'll dig it up."

He got a pick and spade from the tunnel.

Selecting a certain spot, he dug a hole in the floor and exhumed a body.

The detectives flashed their lanterns upon it and Harry examined it closely.

"See! See! The body is petrified!"

Old King Brady and the hermit were amazed.

But they saw that the boy had made no error.

Philip Ray's body had turned to stone!

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

"This is astonishing!" exclaimed Old King Brady.

"How well preserved the body is," Harry added.

"But," said the hermit, "are yer sure who this man is?"

"I'll prove his identity," replied the old detective.

Nellie had provided him with a photograph of her missing father, and he drew the picture from his pocket and compared it with the petrified man's face. The others looked on with absorbing interest.

"That's Philip Ray!" exclaimed the old detective finally. "This picture is an exact copy of those features of stone. Can't you see it?"

"Plain as day," said the hermit, nodding, as he peered over his shoulder.

"How strange that nature so preserved this body that the features are almost intact," said Harry in wonderment. "Look at the forehead—there's the bullet hole. This evidence of Darrell's guilt must convict him."

"Can't yer git ther body out?" asked the hermit.

"We can try. But I fear it's too heavy for us to handle

it easily," the old detective replied. "Dig away more dirt from around it."

This was done.

An attempt was then made to remove the body.

It was found to be extremely heavy.

They succeeded in pulling it out of the grave and dragging it over near the wall, but they could not lift it.

"We'll leave it here till we can get a chance to send for it," said Old King Brady to the hermit. "Will you guard it for us?"

"Certainly I shall."

"Very well. We've seen all we want to now."

"An' you'll keep faith with me, won't yer?"

"Most assuredly, as long as you look out for our interests."

With this understanding they separated.

Returning to Red Buck, the officers mounted their horses and rode away with the Indian along the gulch. They did not mention the hermit to him, and he asked if they saw the ghost.

"Yes," assented Old King Brady. "We saw the ghost."

"And you still live to tell of it?" asked Red Buck in surprise.

"Well," laughed the old veteran, "we look pretty healthy, don't we?"

"Very," replied the guide.

They rode on until they arrived near the valley in which Darrell's mine was located and remained concealed till night fell.

The Bradys then disguised themselves.

Having a complete change of clothing and false beards and wigs, they transformed their appearance so that they looked like a pair of miners.

About eight o'clock they gave Red Buck some instructions and rode away.

They had not gone far before the Indian began to yell and fire off his pistols.

As that was the signal they waited for, the Bradys started their horses off at a gallop and began to yell and fire back at their imaginary pursuers.

In this manner they rode furiously into the mining camp.

Darrell and his gang heard the furor.

With their curiosity aroused, they rushed for the detectives, who had come to a pause and were discharging their pistols back in the direction they came from.

Red Buck, still firing, beat a hasty retreat.

"Hello, there!" yelled Darrell at the detectives. "What's the matter?"

"Ah! Here's some white men, Bill," cried Old King Brady.

"Lend us a hand here, will yer?" yelled Harry. "Thar's a flock o' Crow Injuns on ther warpath wot broke from ther reservation an' it's a-tryin' ter kill us."

"Ride down this way," roared Darrell quickly.

On thundered the horses and they reached the miners.

Every man of the gang clutched a weapon.

"Reckon they seed yer and turned back," said Old King Brady.

"Heave a volley at them, boys!" cried Darrell.

A fusillade pealed out.

Red Buck was not injured.

He fired back and fled unrecognized.

After awhile Darrell's men became convinced that the supposed band of Indians had seen them and fled in alarm.

Then the whole crowd gathered around the detectives and asked for the particulars.

Acting the parts they assumed to perfection, Old King Brady said:

"We struek a fine plaecer an' were agoin' ter stake our claims, when a troop o' redskins in war paint attacked us. We mounted an' rode for our lives. The Injuns chased us here, an'—well, you knows ther rest."

"Will you show us your elaim?" eagerly asked Darrell.

"Yes, if yer don't try ter jump it."

"Oh, we only want to piek out claims near it."

"In that ease we'll show yer. But not to-night, stranger."

"Very well. To-morrow will do."

"Kin we stay here?"

"Of course. There's plenty shanties over yonder."

"Any drinkin' goin' on?"

"Plenty, if you've got the dust or nuggets."

"Ay, we've got plenty o' them."

"Then make yourself at home here."

"What is it—a minin' camp?"

"Yes. Copper."

"Who's ther boss?"

"I am."

"D'yer live here?"

"Yes. In that log hut, when I'm here."

"Whar's ther bar?"

"In that house down by the sluice."

"We'll go an' liquor up. Come along?"

"I don't mind," replied Darrell, "and while we're at it I may show you a way to make money four times as fast as you can dig it out of the ground with a pick and shovel."

"Yer kin?" demanded Old King Brady, with a surprised look. "How?"

"By getting a thousand dollars for every five hundred you invest."

A puzzled expression crossed the old detective's face, and he took a chew of tobacco, pondered a moment, and finally said:

"What are yer givin' me—a steer?"

"No. I've got a lot of light weight Canadian coins I want to sell."

A hearty laugh escaped the detective.

Slapping his leg with his hand, he cried:

"Jernsalem ther golden! Now I understands yer. An' I've seen them coins, too. They're fine. I'd like ter have a million o' them. No trouble ter pass 'em at all."

"Of course not," chuckled Darrell. "They're real silver."

"I know it. We've got six thousand dollars between us, an' I'd like ter get my paws on twelve thousand dollars' worth o' them ere coins fer it."

"You can, my boy, and this is the headquarters fer them."

"What d'yer think o' that fer a deal, Bill?"

"It's out o' sight, Dan," replied Harry.

"Will yer jine me in a investment?"

"Yer kin bet yer boots I will."

"Then that settles it, partner," said Old King Brady to Darrell.

The villain was elated.

He expected to use these two men to shove out thousands of dollars' worth of his bad coins, and he exclaimed:

"Very well. It's a go. You can have the coin to-morrow. And when you get rid of it, come back with twelve thousand dollars and I'll give you twenty-four thousand worth. You can thus keep on doubling your money, and I'll guarantee that in six months' time you'll each be worth a quarter of a million. We've got men out now pushing the stuff all over the country who are getting rich so fast it nearly sets them crazy."

"Waal," said Old King Brady, "we are like all men. We wants ter get all the money we can lay our hands on. If you treats us fair an' square, we kin do a big business together, I'm sure."

"We'll try you," replied Darrell. "Here's the bar. Come in and have a drink."

They passed into a dirty shanty fitted up as a saloon, and found it crowded with the tough characters who worked in Darrell's mine.

Everybody was smoking, laughing, talking, swearing and drinking. At the rear of the place were card tables at which some were gambling furiously at the most hazardous turn of the cards.

Behind the bar stood a big ruffian whose nose was gone, his cropped bullet head showing the scars of many fights, and Darrell said to him:

"The best in the house, Jim."

"All right, Cap. What'll it be, gents?"

"Whisky."

The drinks were served, and after some further talk Darrell said:

"I'll show you a shebang where you can roost for the night, and then I'll leave you to follow your own inclinations till morning."

"We'd rather finish our deal fer that coin right now."

"Very well; I'll take you right to our mint, if you like."

This was exactly what the Bradys were aiming at.

When they assented, Darrell led them from the saloon.

Crossing the enclosure, they passed the mine tunnels in the side of the hill from which the copper ore was taken to the crushers.

"It's a fine plant you've got here," commented Harry.

"Yes," replied Darrell carelessly. "I'm making money like dirt."

"Are you alone in the deal?"

"Oh, yes. My former partner died six months ago."

They reached a well-lighted building and paused.

"Is this their place?" queried Old King Brady.

"Yes. This is where we make the money. Go in."

The detective opened the door.

The next moment they were in the counterfeiter's den.

CHAPTER X.

OVERHEARING A COWARDLY PLOT.

Mark Darrell felt quite safe in showing these two strangers his mint, for he shrewdly calculated that their secrecy could be secured by the great inducement to make a fortune which he had offered them.

Very few men, he figured, would kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Upon glancing around, the detectives observed half a dozen men at work manufacturing the spurious coins with which he was flooding the country.

The silver ore taken from the mines was smelted and refined before it was finally turned over to the counterfeiter for coinage in the form of bars.

At one side there was a hot furnace.

The fire contained a number of crucibles in which the silver was melted. Then other men poured the molten metal into moulds. Others were taking out the coins which had cooled, and a man was packing them in boxes.

Upon the floor near the latter person were numerous boxes with the lids off, containing thousands of the new spurious coins.

"Everything here is worked with a system," said Darrell.

"Ay, so we sec," replied the old detective. "You must make plenty of 'em."

"You may sec for yourself, sir."

"Don't the authorities never pester yer?"

"No. They've never found out where we're located."

"Who'd think o' lookin' fer a mint like this at a copper mine?"

"That's what we bank on to save ourselves from trouble."

"Kin we carry away six thousand dollars' wuth o' them coins on our horses?"

"Easily, by dividing them between you."

"Then here's our money."

He pulled a big wad of bills from his bosom, and Darrell's eyes gleamed.

Counting out six thousand dollars, Old King Brady handed the money to the man and said:

"Here's yer money. Yer kin get them coins ready fur us ter carry 'em off."

"We'll put the stuff in bags," replied Darrell, pocketing the bills.

"No foolin', now."

"My dear fellow, it's my interest to be honest with you."

"Sure it is. We expects ter keep comin' back fer more later on."

"That's just what I want," said Darrell smilingly.

He spoke to one of the men, and he carefully bagged up twelve thousand dollars in silver and carried it to an empty hut the Bradys were to occupy.

Harry went with him each trip he made.

When the money was transferred Darrell left them.

Alone with Old King Brady, the boy demanded:

"Say, are you crazy?"

"No. Why?"

"For buying all those counterfeits."

"Oh, I know what I'm doing."

"Humbug! You'll never get that money."

"I don't expect to."

"Then why did you give it to him?"

"Simply because I wanted to win his confidence, in the first place."

"And in the second place?"

"The bills I gave him were counterfeits."

Harry laughed long and loud at this unexpected reply.

When his mirth subsided he exclaimed:

"Well, you're a corker!"

Old King Brady smiled blandly and replied:

"A counterfeit ain't worth any more than a counterfeit."

They watched Darrell enter his hut, and Harry asked:

"I wonder where he has got Nellie Ray hidden?"

"More than likely she's in his hut."

"Let us find out."

They strode over to Darrell's house.

Without ceremony they pushed the door open and entered.

Before them was a large, pleasant dining room, containing a safe and a desk, and a door at the rear gave ingress to other apartments.

Darrell stood in the front room and a frown of annoyance crossed his face as he turned around and faced the two strangers.

"Well?" he demanded bluntly.

"I fergot ter ask yer whar we kin git supper," replied Old King Brady, coolly.

"Next door to the saloon."

"All right."

"Say, you mustn't come in here without knocking."

"No? Why?"

"Because I allow nobody to enter my house."

"Ax parding, boss. We didn't know that."

"There's the door. You may go," said Darrell curtly.

The Bradys silently departed.

Outside, they smiled at each other, and Harry whispered:

"If the girl's there, she must be in one of the inner rooms."

"Perhaps we may see through one of the windows."

"Get behind the house."

"You keep guard so I won't get caught."

Harry nodded and the old detective glided behind the hut.

There was a window in the rear, but it was covered, much to his disappointment, but he heard Darrell speaking in the hut.

"Get up, Tim!" he exclaimed.

"Hello! What's wanted?" drowsily answered Golden's voice.

"We've got to go up to the dance to-night."

"Oh, yes. I forgot. The girl——"

"If we don't get rid of her to-night we'll lose another day."

"The longer she's alive, the longer your danger lasts."

"Of course. And we don't dare to kill her outright. It

must be made to appear like an accident. It's known we had her, and if she were found killed it would go mighty hard with us."

"We can drown her in the flood."

"That's just what I count on doing. Cut away that one brace, and the water from the dam will rush down the valley and carry her with it. As others are likely to go under, too, it won't look as if she were singled out."

"Where did you leave her?"

"In the haunted hut near the Hermit's Cave."

"That's right in the path of the flood when it comes down."

"Exactly. She will be washed away in the torrent that will sweep down the valley when we cut open the dam," said Darrell.

A frown gathered upon Old King Brady's brow.

"The cowards!" he muttered angrily.

Just then Tim asked:

"What about them two strangers?"

"I've got their money already."

"Do you think we can use them to shove the coin?"

"Oh, yes. They're very enthusiastie over the game."

"Then we must jolly them along to keep in with them."

"By all means. They will be very valuable to us, Tim."

"Do you think you can trust them?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Did you find out where they came from?"

"Not yet, but I think they're Helena men."

Then ensued a few minutes of silence.

Then Tim asked Darrell:

"Going to treat them fair?"

"It's to our interest to do so."

"Don't be too confiding. They may give us away to the authorities and bring a batch of Vigilantes swarming down about our ears. You know the Secret Service has offered a big, fat reward for the capture of our gang and the discovery and breaking up of our mint."

"Oh, I've sized them up carefully. They're all right."

"What time are you going to start for the dam?"

"About ten o'clock."

"Don't tell any of the gang where we are going."

"Certainly not. I don't want them to know our business, or one of them might get drunk some day and give us away. If that girl ain't put out of the way I may have trouble from her over the mine."

"Couldn't she be quietly fixed without going to all this trouble?"

"Of course she could. But I don't want that. I've planned to have her body found drowned after the flood by some people from Butte. That will give her death a natural appearance, and no blame or suspicion of the deed will fall upon our shoulders."

"Perhaps you are right, after all."

They presently changed the subject.

As Darrell finally said he was going out to look after the horses, the detectives stole away and hid in one of the huts.

Here Old King Brady told Harry all he had learned.

The boy was filled with horror and indignation.

"What cowardly murderers they are!" he could not help exclaiming.

"It remains for us to watch them and thwart their design, Harry."

"Most decidedly. But we don't know where the girl is, to rescue her."

"Perhaps we can find out in time."

"How?"

"By questioning Red Buck."

"The villains may lead us to her place of captivity."

"It's doubtful. But we can fairly presume this, that the dam is up the valley at a high point and the hut the girl is in is below it."

They kept a keen watch on Darrell.

At ten o'clock precisely he and Tim rode away on horseback, carrying an ax.

The detectives hastened to where their own horses were tethered, and getting the animals ready, they mounted and started off.

CHAPTER XI.

RACING THE FLOOD.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

It was the voice of a sentry.

The Bradys were startled and instantly reined in.

A gleaming rifle was aimed at them from behind a tree.

"Looks as if we were not going to get away from the mine easily," said Harry.

"We shall! You leave it to me," resolutely answered Old King Brady.

The sentry stepped from behind the tree trunk and demanded:

"Where are you fellows going?"

"Didn't Darrell an' Tim tell yer we was with 'em?" asked Old King Brady.

"No, they didn't," was the surly reply. "But they told me not to let you two pass out of the camp without first notifying them."

"Call 'em back then, partner, an' ax 'em."

"I can't. They're too far away."

"Then yer'll have ter question 'em when we comes back."

"But I ain't going to let you pass."

"Yer ain't?"

"No! Turn back."

"We won't. If you interferes Darrell will give yer rats."

"I'll risk that. Turn back, I say!"

"But how will Darrell know whar ter go without us?"

"Where were you going?"

"Ter show him a claim we staked yesterday."

The sentry pondered.

He was for a moment inclined to let them pass; but upon second consideration he became obdurate and said decisively:

"No! I'll do my duty, if I have a fight over it. It's best to be on the safe side. You can't pass, and that settles it."

If Darrell misses you, he can come back and square it for you. I won't let you go by unless he does."

"D'ye want ter git in trouble?"

"Oh, I'll chance that."

Old King Brady realized that severe measures were necessary.

He therefore suddenly dug spurs in his horses' flanks, the beast leaped toward the sentry, and the man raised his rifle to fire.

Before he could discharge the gun the horse's hoofs struck him, he was knocked down, the weapon flew out of his hands, and his senses fled.

"Dead?" asked Harry, breathlessly.

"Merely unconscious," replied the other.

"Race away before he recovers."

"Come on."

And off their horses galloped up the valley.

Two miles away they gained an eminence, and mounting the crest, they took a survey of the valley.

By this time the moon had risen high in the heavens.

When they looked toward the westward they observed that the valley sloped upward at an acute angle.

A wide brook was running down the middle.

It came from what looked like a distant waterfall.

"There's the source of the stream that feeds the sluice," said Old King Brady, pointing to the fall. "A dam is impounding that water. It must be that dam they intend to break away."

"If it is, this valley will be swept by a swift flood," replied the boy.

"Can you see the haunted hut?"

"No. But I see Darrell and his pal."

"Where are they?"

"Look toward that cluster of trees."

"Well?"

"See the two tiny, moving objects?"

"Oh, yes, I see. That's the pair, sure enough."

"We'll have to hurry to catch up to them."

"I won't attempt to stop them cutting the dam if we can find the girl."

"As they expect the dam to flood only the lower part of the valley," replied Young King Brady, "we must assume that the hut she is confined in is situated directly in the course of the flood."

"But we can't traverse that bottom. The vegetation is too dense. We must remain up here on this trail to follow them."

They rode ahead rapidly.

The dam was fully three miles further on.

When they drew near it, a dark figure glided from the bushes.

It was Red Buck.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "I've been watching you coming up the valley."

"Did you see Darrell and his pal go by?" queried Harry.

"Yes, and I was tempted to shoot them. The sight of you following stayed my hand. I believed you had some object in view."

"So we have."

"What may it be?"

"To find the haunted hut."

"Why, you've passed it."

"Did we?"

"It's two miles down the valley."

"Can you guide us to it?"

"Easily."

"Hark! What's that thumping?"

"Darrell and his man have an ax. They are chopping down one of the supports of the dam. If they do, the lake it holds back will burst into the valley and flood the place."

"That's exactly what they intend to do."

A frightened look covered Red Buck's face and he said:

"We'd better get right up on the high ground out of danger."

"Is there any immediate danger?"

"Come over here and I'll show you."

He led them to a clearing, where they had an uninterrupted view of the dam from top to bottom, and they saw it was made of logs laid across a narrow gorge.

A huge log was holding up an H-shaped breast-piece.

The waterfall which poured over the top of the dam into a big pool at the base was rushing away in the form of a brook.

Standing on some black, mossy rocks were Darrell and Tim.

The former was cutting the brace holding up the breast piece.

By this time it was half cut through.

The immense volume of water it held back weighed thousands of tons and the strain on that race was enormous.

While they glanced at it, they heard Tim shout:

"Look out now! The dam is beginning to bulge in the middle."

"And the brace is cracking," added Darrell.

"With a few more blows you'll weaken it so it will break itself."

"Then I'll deliver them. Get ready to rush for the high ground before the flood bursts through and inundates this spot."

The Bradys turned to Red Buck.

"Ride down the trail like the wind!" gasped Harry to the Indian. "We have got to beat the coming flood to save the girl."

The guide hesitated a moment.

He feared for his own life.

Old King Brady saw what was passing in his mind.

"Go!" he roared.

The Indian gave a start.

But he rode away like the wind.

After him sped the Bradys at top speed.

Down the valley they raced at a furious pace.

"Don't spare your mustang!" yelled Old King Brady at the guide. "A human life depends upon our reaching that hut ahead of the flood, which will soon be coming after us."

Boon! came an appalling roar just then.

They heard it, and with shudders of alarm glanced back.

The center of the dam was bulged far out now, for the brace had broken and fallen, and Darrell and his man had fled to a place of safety.

"It's breaking fast," exclaimed the boy.

"Yes. The whole thing is apt to give away at any moment now," his partner replied. "Go faster, Red Buck, faster!"

"My pony is doing its best now," panted the guide.

On, on they thundered swiftly, urging their mounts on with voice, spur and lash, until they fairly flew over the ground.

It was a desperate ride.

Crash! came another awful report from the dam.

Some of the logs had given away.

Down came a big volume of water with a mad rush on the bosom of the brook, and they saw with what frightful rapidity it overtook them.

"Has the dam gone?" asked Harry.

"Only part of it," said the old detective.

With a hissing roar the water rushed past them, and they plunged ahead with renewed anxiety, as they feared at any moment to hear the whole dam give away.

The wonder was that it held together as long as it did.

Just then Red Buck yelled:

"Turn to the right."

"What's the matter?" cried Harry.

"Here's the cabin."

"Thank the Lord for that!"

They plunged down into the deepest part of the valley, tearing through the tangled vines, and neared the stream.

As they burst into a clearing they saw a lone hut standing close beside the stream. It was here Nellie was held a prisoner.

CHAPTER XII.

OVERTAKEN BY THE FLOOD.

"Miss Ray!" shouted Harry, pounding at the door.

"Help! Help!" shrieked the girl's voice in the hut.

"Open the door!"

"I can't!"

Bang! came a shot from the bushes just then, and a bullet whistled past Old King Brady's head dangerously near.

Red Buck glanced around.

He saw the rough-looking man who had fired.

Evidently Darrell had left him to guard the prisoner.

Quick as lightning the Indian raised his rifle and fired a shot.

It must have hit the villain, for he gave a yell of agony and dashed away among some trees and bushes where the Indian's mustang could not follow him. There he vanished.

"Harry, we'll have to break down the door," coolly said the old officer, after a glance at the man who had shot at him.

"Rush at it with your shoulder," replied the boy.

They charged on the door and struck it heavily.

It shook, but failed to give away.

"Useless," said the old detective.

Just then there sounded a distant, dull, thundering crash.

It was an appalling grinding and splitting sound, and Harry gasped.

"The dam is broken!"

"For heaven's sake, get a rock!"

They each seized a stone as big and heavy as they could lift.

Staggering over to the door with their burdens, they raised them high over their heads and hurled them with all their strength at the door.

Crash! Bang! came the report, and the door was burst open.

"Hurry! The flood is coming down the valley!" yelled Red Buck frantically. "We'll all get drowned!"

Into the hut rushed the detectives.

A terrible roaring and rumbling sound was coming from up the valley as an immense wall of hissing water burst from the broken dam and rushed like an avalanche down on the little brook.

It was spreading in all directions.

But it kept pushing straight ahead as it came down the hill and flooded everything in its resistless rush.

Trees and bushes were torn to pieces by the flood, huge boulders were swept aside like mere pebbles, and it came with the speed of a locomotive.

As the stream swiftly swelled, its waters rose up around the hut with frightful speed in advance of the flood.

The Bradys knew what to expect.

Glancing around the solitary room the hut contained, they saw Nellie Ray on one knee on the floor, her face covered with her hands.

Harry dashed toward her.

"Get up! Quick—on your life!" he cried.

She slowly arose, pale, weak and trembling.

Glancing at them, she gasped in alarm:

"I don't know you."

"We are the Bradys, disguised."

"Oh, I am so glad!"

"Come, quick! There's a flood coming down on us."

Each grasped her and rushed her to the door.

Just then Red Buck screamed in frantic tones:

"Come on, or you'll be too late!"

They heard the dull rumbling of the tidal wave, and as they sped out the moonlight showed them the mountain of water leaping toward them like some hideous monster.

"The horses!" gasped Harry.

"Here they are. You take the girl!"

In an instant they were mounted on the frightened beasts' backs, and saw the terrified Indian riding up the hillside like a madman.

"Go!" shouted Harry to his partner.

The horses needed no urging.

Up the slope they tore, each step bringing them higher.

But they were not destined to escape so easily, for the wave came rushing up to them before they got high enough to escape its influence.

The horses were thrown down.

It was with great difficulty that the Bradys saved themselves from being dismounted as the wall of water engulfed them.

The next instant the snorting horses, swept along by the flood, were battling furiously for their lives.

"Hang on to me!" Young King Brady shouted to the girl.

"I trust to your courage!" she murmured.

When they rose to the surface of the boiling current and were carried along, the boy guided the horse shoreward.

The gallant beast was swimming well.

Both the boy and girl were buried in the water to their shoulders.

Near by was Old King Brady, anxiously watching them.

"Are you safe?" he shouted loudly to make himself heard above the tumultuous roaring of the water.

"We are all right," the girl answered.

"Look out the floating tree trunks don't hit you."

The hut had been swept off its foundations, and if the girl had been left inside a few minutes longer she must have perished.

Every one observed this fact.

Here the current did not flow so strongly, and they quickly got entirely out of the flood on the side of the hill.

Red Buck came galloping over to them.

His black eyes searchingly sized them up, and, apparently satisfied with his inspection, he gave a grunt, and said:

"All right."

"We started none too soon," replied Harry.

"Your disguises are spoiled by the water."

"Never mind. We don't need them any more."

"Which way you go now?"

"Guide us to the Hermit's Cave."

"What for?"

"To see if Miss Ray can identify her father's remains."

A startled look crossed the girl's pallid face, for up to now she did not know they had found the body of Philip Ray.

Harry observed her look, and asked:

"Can you stand it?"

"Is he fit to look at after so long a time?" she queried.

"Yes. His body, strange to say, is petrified. There is nothing disagreeable about it. You should be glad it is so."

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed.

"Let us dry our clothing," suggested Old King Brady.

They found a suitable place, and building a fire in a sheltered spot for Nellie, they made another for themselves among some rocks.

In two hours their clothing was dry.

They then proceeded on their way.

Having reached the vicinage of the cave, the superstitious Indian left them, as he was still afraid to venture into the place.

The hermit was awake and on the alert.

He was informed of the object of their visit, and lit a pine torch.

The body was then shown to the girl, and the moment she saw it she burst into tears and cried in excited tones:

"Yes, yes, that is the corpse of my father, Mr. Brady."

"Are you sure?" Harry demanded, as the old hermit held the flaming torch over the petrified body so she could discern every feature.

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "I ought to know him if any one does."

"Then the case is complete," said the boy. "Your identifying this body proves that the man Darrell shot was Philip Ray. It corroborates Barney Green's confession. We now have clear evidence against Darrell. Our future mission must be to place him under arrest."

"Is there any way in which my poor father's remains can receive a Christian burial?" asked Nellie, anxiously.

"We shall attend to that later."

They decided to remain in the cave over night.

Red Buck was informed.

He volunteered to remain on guard over night, and as the hermit had plenty of bedding of dried leaves, the rest made themselves comfortable.

On the following morning the hermit gave them a good breakfast, and they carried some to the guide.

Then they set out for Butte City.

It was nightfall ere they arrived, and Nellie was placed in care of some of her friends, and the Bradys finally retired in their hotel.

On the following day a raid on the copper mine was planned and the detectives called on the authorities.

As the community was anxious to get rid of the counterfeiters, they had no trouble to raise a posse of one hundred armed men.

Led by the Bradys and guided by Red Buck, the troupe set out on the following morning for the Jolly Joker mine.

By nightfall they reached the neighborhood of the counterfeiters' lair, and a plan of action was quickly decided upon.

They then started for the mine.

Riding down the valley, they soon arrived in sight of Darrell's place, and held their rifles in readiness for action.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTURING THE COUNTERFEITERS.

Bang!

A rifle shot broke the silence.

It came from one of the copper mine sentries.

A cry of pain escaped one of the vigilantes who was wounded.

The sentry rushed into the enclosure yelling wildly at the top of his voice:

"Arm yourselves! An attack! The Vigilantes!"

Old King Brady turned to his followers.

"We are discovered," he cried. "Charge on them, and spare no man!"

A furious rush was made for the gates of the enclosure, but they were closed and fastened, and the attacking party had to pause.

"Batter the gates down!" shouted Harry.

A log was found, a dozen men used it as a battering-ram, and after several powerful blows they smashed one of the gates open.

A wild, triumphant yell escaped them.

Through the opening galloped the horses.

Up in the shanties and about the shops the tough gang were gathering their arms and preparing for a desperate resistance.

Tim Golden was in charge of the gang.

Darrell had gone away that day.

As the rascals knew they could expect no mercy, they were prepared to fight to the last to save themselves from going to jail.

When the Vigilantes dashed forward, therefore, they were met by a volley of shots, which wounded several.

"Give it to them!" shouted Old King Brady.

The attacking party obeyed with a vengeance, and they made every shot count, for many of the villains were wounded.

A terrible battle then ensued.

Shots were given and taken in rapid succession.

A chorus of curses and yells arose on all sides, and men and beasts were rushing in all directions all over the place.

The attacking party outnumbered their enemies and had the advantage of being mounted, and they were all sober and good marksmen.

Moreover, they had courage, while the villains had none.

The result was a quick and decisive victory.

As the rascals began to throw down their arms and yell for mercy, Harry dashed up to Tim Golden, aimed a pistol at him and shouted:

"Surrender, or I'll shoot you!"

"Young King Brady!" gasped the man.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes. I'll give in," he replied, dropping his weapons.

"Up with your hands!"

"All right. But say, how did you find this place?"

"We were here disguised as two miners."

"Ha! So those two were you fellows, eh?"

"Yes, and we saved Nellie Ray's life before the flood reached her."

"You did?"

"Of course we did. We overheard your plot, and followed you and Darrell to the dam you cut open. Red Buck guided us."

"Curse that Indian! Now I can understand why you attacked our sentry. He told us you were following us."

Harry laughed and asked:

"Where is Darrell?"

"Gone to Helena."

"Sorry to hear it. We've got your whole gang now, and we'll gobble up that mint and put you all in jail, where you belong. Your plot to put Nellie Ray out of the way was a dismal failure."

Just then a couple of the Vigilantes came along and bound Tim so he could not escape.

Old King Brady had been leading an attacking party

against the mint, in which some of the gang had taken refuge.

As they rushed for the door a deadly fusilade poured out at them, and several more of the detectives' party were wounded.

The rest pressed on, however, and rushed in.

Here a hand-to-hand struggle took place, and the fight raged furiously for a quarter of an hour before the desperate men were subdued.

When the last man went down Old King Brady waved his hat and cried:

"The place is ours!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" yelled the Vigilantes excitedly.

"This is their mint," proceeded the old detective. "See the silver bars, the furnaces, the moulds, crucibles, dies and milling machines. It's the biggest and finest plant of its kind in the country."

"And here," added one of the men, pointing at a stack of wooden boxes, "are thousands of the Canadian counterfeits already made."

"We'll utilize one of their wagons and teams to carry away the stuff," said Old King Brady. "Some of you get a rig ready and pack this stuff in it for transportation."

While they did as he ordered, the detective went outside and looked over the battlefield.

Every one of Darrell's gang were captured and tied up with the exception of a couple who managed to escape.

These men rode away to inform Darrell of the raid and to put him on his guard against arrest.

The detectives and their assistants now made a careful examination of the whole place and saw what a finely equipped mine it was.

Next they passed into the shafts.

A careless glance sufficed to show them that there was a rich lead of copper there which would yield a vast fortune.

The silver was a very small factor.

When they finished their inspection, and the two Bradys were alone, the boy said, with a serious expression:

"Since Philip Ray dropped out of this place, I guess there has been mighty little copper mining done here. Mark Darrell is a thoroughly bad man. His taste runs toward crooked work. He'd rather be dishonest than gain his fortune by legitimate methods. This is shown by the way he has been conducting matters here. He preferred to mine what little silver there was here and convert it to a crooked use. When he ended the game, and got rid of Nellie, I presume he intended to sell the mine for a large sum of money and then doubtless disappear forever."

"I've questioned several of the gang to find out if Golden was lying when he told you that Darrell had gone to Helena," said Old King Brady, "and as each individual said he had gone to that city, it seems fair to assume that Tim was telling the truth."

"In that case," replied the boy, "I presume you intend to go to that city to look for him after we have put the prisoners in jail at Butte City and taken care of the petrified body

of Mr. Ray. It would be a very easy matter for us to get that body now, with the assistance of all these men and the facility of the cart for transporting it, which we shall use to carry away the counterfeiting layout."

"My dear boy, you have hit upon my plans exactly," said the old detective with a smile. "Somebody must be left here to guard this mine when we depart from it. Two men will be required. They must protect the property against thieves, and at the same time keep a lookout for Darrell, who may return here, thinking the place has been deserted by everybody after the raid."

"We can get two of the Butte City officers to do that while we are off hunting down Darrell," said Harry. "That villain will never work this mine again, for before he could even attempt to do so we ought to have him in jail for murdering his partner. In court we can prove his bill of sale from Ray to be a forgery, and Nellie will eventually come into possession of her rights in spite of the ill-paced, daring game that wretch played in his attempt to swindle her."

They made their plans known to the rest, and had no difficulty in securing two good men to remain on guard at the mine.

On the following day Red Buck guided a wagon party to the Hermit's Cave, and the petrified body was secured and carried away.

When the counterfeiters' plant was loaded on the wagon, the prisoners were put in other vehicles, and they set out for Butte City.

Arrived there, the villains were locked up.

Mr. Ray's body was put in a tomb, and the authorities confiscated the tools and materials for making the light-weight Canadian coins.

Leaving Harry in Butte City, the old detective went to Helena, and was gone several days.

When he returned he said to Harry:

"I've had that city scoured by the police, and found that Darrell really had been there. It seems he was trying to interest some big capitalists in the Jolly Joker so he could sell out to them at a high figure. They are going to examine the property before coming to a final decision, and we may find Darrell there to meet them. But there is a curious phase to the matter."

"What was that?" asked the boy.

"Before Darrell had finished arranging to meet his prospective customers, two men joined him and told him something that seemed to agitate him intensely. He excused himself, left the gentlemen, and has not been seen since, much to their astonishment."

"Why," laughed Harry, "those two men must have been the members of his gang who escaped us at the mine. When they fled, they in all probability went straight to Helena to tell him about the raid. He expects the police after him now, and is doubtless hiding until he finds out what the upshot of the affair is going to be."

"By Jove! you must be right," exclaimed the old detective. "It's queer I never thought of that before."

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER MARK DARRELL.

On the following day the Bradys called on a lawyer with Nellie, and after telling him how Mark Darrell tried to swindle the girl, they produced all their proofs of the man's villainy, and the old detective said:

"We now want you to institute legal proceedings to protect Miss Ray's interests in the matter of this copper mine. As her father's only heiress, she owns a fifty per cent. interest in the Jolly Joker. We don't want you to bother with the criminal charges we are working up against Darrell. We simply want you to prove the validity of the young lady's claim, show the court that Philip Ray never sold his interest to his partner, and make the villain give a proper accounting."

"I should say I won't have any trouble to do as you wish, Mr. Brady," replied the lawyer cheerfully. "With all the evidence of this man's perfidy which you have accumulated, it will be an easy matter to prove his swindling game and recover what belongs to the young lady."

After a protracted conversation with the man, during which all the evidence was carefully gone over, they left him.

The Bradys escorted Nellie home.

They then started for their hotel.

When they arrived they found Red Buck awaiting them.

The Indian was wild with impatience and delighted when he saw them.

"I've got good news for you!" he burst out eagerly.

"What is it, Red Buck?" asked Old King Brady with a smile.

"To-day I saw Mark Darrell."

"You did? Where?"

"On horseback, an hour's travel from here."

"What was he doing?"

"Heading for the direction of the copper mine."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Then he must be going there to meet the capitalists he wants to sell out to."

"Can't you ascertain by telegraphing to Helena?" asked Harry eagerly.

"Yes. I've got their address. Wait a moment."

He went to the telegraph office.

In an hour he returned, a look of triumph on his face.

"Well?" expectantly asked the boy.

"My theory was correct," answered the old detective.

"You communicated with the syndicate?"

"I did, and they confirmed my suspicion."

"He's bound to fall into the hands of the two men on guard there."

"Undoubtedly, if they don't fall prey to him first."

"And if they do we won't know it."

"Not unless we trail him there."

"Will you lead us, Red Buck?"

"Sure. Got ready," answered the red man.

They made hasty preparations, got their horses, and soon after the guide led them out on the plains.

In a short time they struck Darrell's trail, for the Indian had it located.

"Here's the place," said Red Buck, pointing at the hoof prints.

"Can you follow it?" queried Old King Brady.

"Easily."

"Go ahead, then."

And off they went.

With the unerring instinct of a bloodhound the red man led the detectives over the trail, and after some hours of hard riding they came to the conclusion that Red Buck had made no error about Darrell's destination.

When night closed in upon them they lost sight of the trail, but pushed ahead in the direction of the mine, sure that Darrell was going there.

It was nearly midnight when they reached the enclosure and passed in, expecting to see the two officers on guard there.

A light in one of the huts attracted their attention.

"They must be living in that shanty," said Harry, dismounting.

"We'll soon find out," replied the old detective, following his example.

Red Buck said nothing.

He remained on his mustang and was staring around the enclosure cautiously, for he thought that Darrell must have reached the place and must be lurking somewhere about the mine.

The Bradys stole toward the hut like twin shadows.

Pushing open the door, they entered.

A man was sitting at a table poring over some papers.

He glanced up with a startled expression when they came in, and then uttered a violent oath and sprang to his feet, crying:

"By heavens, it's the Bradys!"

He was Mark Darrell.

Seeing him in undisputed possession of the place led the detectives to imagine he had gained the mastery of the two guards they left there.

For an instant there was a deep silence.

Then Darrell knocked the lamp from the table.

It smashed to pieces on the floor.

Dense gloom settled down.

"If you budge an inch we'll shoot!" roared Old King Brady.

He drew a match, and his pistol; then they listened intently. Not a sound broke the silence.

Old King Brady lit the match, and as the tiny flame flared up he cried:

"He's gone!"

"Look in the next room!" cried Harry.

They rushed through the apartment they were in and passed through the door just in time to see Darrell going out a window.

"There he goes, Harry!"

"Out the door with you!" replied the boy.

And out they rushed, around the hut they darted, and then they saw their man.

Red Buck had seen him, too, and was galloping furiously toward him, but Darrell had a good lead and plunged into one of the mine shafts.

The Bradys halted at the entrance and the veteran exclaimed:

"It's a fearful risk to follow him into that hole, Harry."

"Nevertheless I'm going in," dauntlessly answered the young detective.

"Light your lantern. There may be pitfalls ahead."

This was done, although they knew it would show Darrell where they were, and thus give him a chance to shoot at them.

Into the tunnel they rushed, their pistols ready for use.

The passage was large, and led them in fifty feet under the hill; then it turned and sloped upward at a sharp angle.

When they reached the top of the shaft they emerged into the open air upon a rocky ledge from which a ladder led to the ground below.

Just then Red Buck saw them and shouted:

"He's got his horse and gone."

"The deuce! Couldn't you stop him?"

"No. I just came from the other tunnel and found the two men in there tied hand and foot. I've released them. When I came out I saw Darrell on his horse dashing toward the broken gate."

The detectives returned to the place where Red Buck stood and now saw the two guards standing and talking to him.

"I see Darrell got the best of you," remarked Harry, approaching them.

"He came in and caught us both asleep," sheepishly answered one of the men. "By the time we woke up he had us bound and helpless."

"You should not have been so careless."

"Well," impatiently exclaimed the Indian, "you go after him."

"By all means," cried Old King Brady.

There was no time to be lost, and they hastily mounted their horses, and, leaving the two guards behind, they dashed away.

There was only one way Darrell could go, and they soon saw him on his horse riding up the valley at a breakneck pace, and glancing back over his shoulder every few moments to see if he were pursued.

"There he goes!" cried the Indian, pointing at his flying figure.

"See if we can't overtake him," replied Old King Brady briskly.

They drove their horses at the top of their speed, but soon lost view of the man.

Several hours were spent in a vain search for him.

At last they had to give it up.

When they met Red Buck exclaimed:

"We'll have to wait for daylight to find his trail."

"Very well," said Old King Brady. "We'd better camp here for the night as we won't have so far to go when we return. If you can find the villain we'll hang onto his tracks

and run him down if it takes a month of incessant following to do the trick."

They found a suitable place and turned in.

As they had some food with them, they partook of a light breakfast on the following day, mounted their horses and then hunted for Darrell's trail.

Red Buck found it.

The Indian started off afoot and led his horse by the bridle.

He could read the signs of that trail with remarkable precision, and once he got following it he never lost it for an instant.

To his surprise he found that Darrell had not gone up to the table land, as they expected he would do, but had turned abruptly to the left and made his way up in the mountains.

As the villain was familiar with that wild region and knew his chances were best to escape his pursuers by taking the upland course, he had thus vanished from their sight.

The trail led the Bradys into a wild, picturesque region, hard to traverse and difficult to be followed.

But Red Buck was equal to the task, for he held on to the fugitive's trail with the dogged persistence of a bloodhound.

CHAPTER XV.

A ROCKY MOUNTAIN GRIZZLY.

"Look out, Harry, or you'll get killed!"

"It's Darrell up on that plateau, hurling rocks down at us."

Crash—bang! came the falling missiles, and the Bradys had to spur their horses away to avoid the rocks that came shooting down through the air.

When they got away from the base of the small precipice, they saw the villain above them, and he shook his fist at the detectives and yelled:

"I'll fix you yet, you dogs!"

"You'd better surrender," replied Old King Brady.

"Never! I'll die first."

"Then you'll have to take the consequence."

As quick as a flash the detective raised his rifle and fired at him. But the rascal saw the movement and leaped behind a rock.

The sharp crack of the rifle rang out, and a mocking laugh of derision came back from the villain as the ball flew harmlessly by.

"Missed!" growled the old detective, savagely.

"He's as quick as a cat," replied Harry.

The old detective now glanced around, and asked:

"What has become of Red Buck?"

"He was riding in among those trees the last time I saw him."

Just then Darrell began to shoot down at them.

He had done this before, causing the detectives to dash over close to the face of the cliffs to escape his bullets, whereupon the villain had driven them from their shelter by heaving down the rocks.

As the humming bullets came whizzing around the detectives, the boy started his horse off at a gallop, and cried:

"We'll go under if we remain here any longer!"

"See if we can't get up there at him," the old detective suggested.

"I don't see any way yet."

"By thunder, he is either a poor marksman, or else we are very lucky to escape being hit by any of those bullets!"

They had to run the gauntlet, but soon passed out of danger when they gained the shelter of the trees where Red Buck had disappeared.

Here they reined in for a moment.

"Hey, Red Buck—Red Buck!" shouted Harry.

They listened intently a few moments, then heard a reply. It was in the guide's voice, but the words he uttered were:

"Help! Help!"

The detectives were startled.

"He must be in trouble," said Harry.

"Surely not with Darrell?"

"No. He's too far away."

"Ride on till we see what's the trouble."

"There's his trail in the soft soil. We can follow it."

They hurried ahead, but the road now became so steep that the horses could hardly bear their burdens, and the detectives dismounted and led them.

In a few moments they heard the Indian's voice again.

It was apparently much nearer, and he was shouting, frantically:

"Hurry, or I'm a dead man!"

"What can the matter be?" gasped Harry.

"Hark! What's that growling?"

"Sounds like a wild beast."

They rushed into a clearing and beheld a thrilling scene.

The guide lay on his back upon the ground, and an enormous grizzly bear stood over him, with one huge paw upon his breast!

It gave the Bradys a shock of surprise.

The brute saw them.

It had its attention distracted from its victim, and had raised its shaggy head and had fastened the baleful glare of its wicked little eyes on them.

"Good Lord!" gasped Harry.

"Fire at the brute!" Old King Brady exclaimed.

Their rifles were loaded, and they raised them; but just then the old detective's horse became terrified at the bear, and began to rear and plunge in a frantic effort to get away to a place of safety.

It prevented the detective from firing.

Harry let his shot go.

It cut a painful wound in the beast's head.

A strange cry of pain escaped the animal, and it started toward them.

"Mind my horse!" cried the boy, letting go the bridle.

He had to keep his glance fixed upon the oncoming brute.

While Old King Brady was struggling with the horses, the Indian bounded to his feet and made a rush for his mustang.

Harry had several more shots in his magazine rifle.

Observing that the brute was coming to give him a figal, the boy took careful aim at its head and fired again.

The monster's thick skull deflected the ball.

As the second wound was cut, the beast flew into a terrible rage.

It seemed to know that it owed its misery to the boy, for it headed straight at him, whining and growling as it came.

"Look out, Harry!" roared Old King Brady, who saw his danger.

He took steady aim for the third time, and the big beast was very close to him; but as he fired, he took a step back and stumbled over a root.

The ball sped harmlessly through the air.

Just as the big brute rose on its hind legs before him, he swung the gun around by the barrel and gave the animal a terrific blow on the neck.

It knocked the beast down.

While it was struggling to get up, the young detective's keen hunting-knife was plunged into the animal's shoulder.

It gave a fearful roar of pain.

The next moment the boy was caught in its embrace.

Pulled close to its shaggy hide by the enormous claws, Harry's arms were pinioned to his side so he could not wield the knife in self-defense.

He glanced up and saw the bear's huge mouth open.

A formidable double row of gleaming teeth were disclosed, and he could feel its hot breath fanning his cheek.

"Help me!" he shouted to his friends.

"Don't struggle or he bite you!" yelled Red Buck.

The Indian had a lasso coiled on his saddle-pommel.

He swung the lariat and let it fly.

As the line whizzed through the air it unwound, and the noose dropped with unerring precision over the bear's head.

"Get along!" yelled the Indian, at his mustang.

The horse sprang away.

As the end of the lasso was tied to the saddle, the line was quickly pulled taut, and the noose tightened around the bear's throat.

The monster began to choke.

It was the guide's design to pull the bear over so it would have to release Harry in order to stand upon its four paws.

"Fire at him!" the redskin yelled at Old King Brady.

The latter had released the horses.

Getting behind the beast, he let a shot fly into its broad back.

At the same moment the bear fell.

To save itself, it released Harry.

The boy fell senseless from the frightful squeezing he had received.

"It has killed him!" roared Old King Brady, in dismay.

He was furious and fired at the bear once more.

The bullets he drove into its tough hide did not reach a vital spot and therefore seemed to make but little impression.

Growling and snarling, the beast got upon its paws and made an attempt to get back at Harry. But Red Buck saw what its intention was in time, and rode away.

When the lasso tightened and began to choke the bear

again, the more it tried to reach the boy; it finally changed its tactics.

Leaving Harry, it went ambling toward the Indian.

"Pick up Harry!" shouted Red Buck, as he started his mustang off.

He rode around in a circle, with the bear racing after him.

While he kept the brute's attention so engaged, Old King Brady picked up the boy from the ground and saw he was alive.

He rushed away with his burden, to a safe place, and tried to revive Young King Brady.

When he succeeded in doing this, he did not wait to answer any questions, but picked up his rifle and darted back to the clearing.

Here he saw that the bear had slackened the line in chasing the Indian, and the lasso had become tangled about its legs.

All at once the animal tripped, and with its legs hopelessly caught in the lasso, it found itself unable to get up.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BUYING SYNDICATE.

"Shoot the beast!" shouted Red Buck to Old King Brady, in excited tones.

He still clung to the end of the lasso, and the detective ran over to the prostrate bear, and aiming his rifle at it, he pulled the trigger.

But there came no report, as he had used up all his cartridges.

The animal was struggling furiously to get its legs free of the line tangled about them, and Old King Brady dropped his rifle and picking up Harry's knife, he made an attempt to run it into the bear's heart.

Just then the savage creature swung around and snapped at him.

He could not get away, and Red Buck sent his mustang galloping over to the animal, and levelling his pistol, began to fire at it.

Just then several shots came from the plateau behind them.

Darrell had crept to the edge of the rocks, and witnessing the affray, he saw a good chance to kill them.

As the bullets came flying about them, Old King Brady saw the man.

"Look out! Darrell is shooting at us!" he cried, warningly.

Just then Harry appeared.

The boy had fully recovered from the encounter.

He saw the villain, up on the rocks, and drew his pistol. Aiming, he discharged one shot.

It hit Darrell and made him yell and swear.

The next moment the bear was killed by the Indian, and Old King Brady staggered back, with his sleeve released.

"Where are your horses?" asked Red Buck.

"Ran away," replied Old King Brady.

"Better find them."

"Very well. Come and help me, Harry."

They hastened down the slope, and discovering the beasts grazing a short distance off, they captured them and returned to Red Buck.

He was standing beside the carcass of the bear.

Having disentangled his lasso from its legs, he had coiled it up and hung it on his saddle-pommel again.

"It's a pity we can't secure this bear's skin," said the Indian regretfully.

"Got no time for that now," replied Old King Brady. "See if you can find a way to get up on that plateau, so we can get Darrell."

They went further up the slope.

After a long search, they found a way to reach the spot they were aiming for. But when they reached it they found Darrell gone.

"It's disappointing!" exclaimed Harry, in tones of chagrin.

"All we can do is to keep on trailing him," replied Red Buck, quietly.

The hunt was resumed.

It led them down the mountain.

Finally they reached a broad stream of water.

Here the trail ended and Red Buck lost courage.

"He is very cunning," the Indian exclaimed, in tones of exasperation, "for he has hidden his tracks in the bed of this stream. Now we do not know whether to go up the stream or down; nor do we know if he crossed over, or kept to this embankment. You can be sure, though, that we won't find his trail in a hurry."

"He's about the slickest article I ever tackled!" exclaimed Old King Brady.

"We'd better make one desperate effort to find his tracks," said the boy, who hated to acknowledge defeat: "and if we can't find them, we can go back to the mine and try to meet the syndicate he was going to sell out to. The rascal will undoubtedly make a desperate effort to dispose of his interest in the Jolly Joker, and clear out of this place as soon as possible, as the neighborhood is getting too hot to hold him."

This plan was followed.

But they failed to find the missing trail.

On the following day their food gave out and they returned to the mine.

As they expected, they found several men there, with an expert, who had been examining the mine with a view to buying it.

Neither of the guards told them anything about Darrell.

"We left that for you to do, Mr. Brady," said one of them.

The old detective smiled, and approached the buyers, saying:

"Well, gentlemen, Mr. Darrell did not meet you here as he promised."

"No," replied the leader of the party, "but we were not certain he would be on hand, as he said he was not sure he could."

"You will meet him later in Helena, then, I presume?"

"That was the arrangement, in case he did not meet us here."

"When are you to see him?"

"He did not stipulate. But he led us to believe it would be some day this week, at our office, where we met before."

"Well, what do you think of the mine?"

"It's as good as he represented."

"And the price?"

"Two millions."

"Yes?"

"We are willing to buy it at that figure."

"Entirely from him?"

"Certainly. He is the sole owner, I believe."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Yes."

"Then he lied, outrageously."

"Can it be possible?"

"He only owns half of it."

And the other half?"

"Is owned by Miss Nellie Ray."

"But he bought out her father."

"No, he didn't. He murdered Philip Ray."

"Murdered him?" echoed the startled man.

"Yes, murdered him. We've got proof of his guilt."

"What did he do that for?"

"In order to gain sole possession of the mine."

"But such a thing could not be done offhand."

"Of course not. He filed forged bills of sale in order to make his title clear. But Miss Ray has now got the authorities exposing his villainy and in a few days she will be able to establish her claim."

"I see."

"Why, that scoundrel even tried to kill her, so she could not interfere with his plan to retain sole control of this mine."

"He must be a very bad man."

"So he is."

"Well," said the gentleman, "as a matter of business, we don't care anything about the private affairs of the owners of this mine. All we know is this: If the owner or owners can give us a clean title to the property, and wish to sell it, we stand ready to buy it."

"That's business."

"And that's where our interest in the matter ends."

"Very well. As we represent Miss Ray, it will afford us great pleasure in trying to induce her to sell her interest to you when she has legal proof of her claim. We merely wish to put you on your guard against Darrell. He would try to swindle you into the belief that he owns the whole outfit. If you pay the whole price to him you would simply lose a million dollars, and find yourselves only half owners of the property instead of sole proprietors."

"We are obliged for the warning."

"One thing more."

"And that is?"

"This: If you meet Darrell in Helena, do not let him know that we have posted you about this matter."

"Certainly not. He has all the papers ready to consum-

mate the sale. And, strange to say, he insisted on selling us this mine in two separate shares—one, his original half interest, which we can buy singly, and the other his dead partner's half interest, which we can purchase separately."

"Ah! He wants to sell you the mine outright, or only his original half interest in it, eh?" laughed Old King Brady.

"Yes. That was his proposition."

"Bound to make sure of selling his own legitimate interest first and run chances on disposing of the stolen share, I see."

After some further conversation, the buyers departed for Helena.

When they were gone, Old King Brady said to Harry:

"It's useless for us to remain here any longer. Our best course is to follow these men to Helena, and keep them shadowed all the time. Darrell has no particular object in coming back here now. All he wants is to close his deal with them. This he must do in person. Therefore we are bound to find him sooner or later in the company of that syndicate closing his deal."

The boy agreed with this view of the case, and they soon afterward left the mine with Red Buck, and rode away.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DESPERATE LEAP FOR LIBERTY.

The Bradys and Red Buck trailed the syndicate of Helena mine buyers back to Butte City, and saw them board the cars there.

They then called on Nellie Ray's lawyer and told him how Darrell was closing a deal to sell his half and the girl's half interests in the Jolly Joker.

"He may be able to sell out his own interest," said the lawyer, "but I've got the matter so fixed by law now that he can't dispose of his dead partner's interest until the matter has been thoroughly examined by the courts."

"Then he's baffled already in his scheme to rob your client?" said Harry.

"Yes, indeed. Moreover, I've proven the bills of sale to be rank forgeries, by comparing the signatures with some of Mr. Ray's handwriting which Miss Ray furnished me."

"If you gentlemen can arrest the villain for the murder of his partner we will soon make him confess his swindling operations."

"We are going to Helena to-morrow to keep the syndicate shadowed," answered Old King Brady. "As Darrell is bound to meet them, he will thus fall into our hands."

They soon left the lawyer and called on Nellie.

Putting her into possession of the facts, they gave her some good advice, and finally went to their hotel.

On the following morning, when Red Buck met them, Harry said:

"While we are away, you remain here in Butte. We want you to keep a sharp lookout for Darrell. If you see anything of him telegraph us at once to an address we will give you, and we will come back by the first train."

Knowing they could trust him, the Bradys finally left Butte City.

When they were nearing Helena, the old detective said:

"Do you know, Harry, I haven't notified our chief of our success thus far in breaking up that counterfeiters' gang."

"You seem to forget that the newspapers would have such an important item as that arrest, the day after we landed our men in jail."

"Sure enough. I forget that such news is telegraphed to New York. Well, if he knows it, he must imagine something is doing out here. But I was anxious to complete our task by arresting Darrell before turning in a clear report. And I hope we'll gain our point."

"The villain certainly won't remain up in that mountain very long with no food or comfort save that which his own exertions bring him, when he has the money in civilization to purchase every luxury."

"Let's go up forward in the smoker."

Just as they stepped inside, a man arose and turned into the aisle ahead.

"Darrell!"

"Brady!"

Like a flash the villain whipped out his revolver, covered the old detective, who was in advance of Harry, and roared, threateningly:

"Hands up!"

"Up they go," replied Old King Brady, obeying.

"Move an inch and I'll kill you!" hissed the villain.

"I wouldn't risk it," laughed the old detective.

He was cool, calm and collected to a wonderful degree, but the passengers in the coach were thrown into a wild panic of alarm when they saw that revolver, and dodged down behind the seats.

For a moment there was a deep silence.

Then Darrell caught a glimpse of Harry, and cried:

"And you, too!"

"Too busy," said Harry.

And, bang! went a pistol he had drawn.

The boy aimed at Darrell's pistol hand and hit it. The pistol fell.

With a howl of agony, as the ball cut into his flesh, Darrell suddenly wheeled around and rushed out the door.

"After him!" cried Harry.

"You're a good shot," chuckled Old King Brady.

And they ran after Darrell, who now got down upon one of the steps of the car and glared in through the forward window at them.

Seeing his action, Young King Brady cried:

"I believe he's going to jump from the train!"

"He'll break his neck if he does, going at this speed."

"The man is desperate!"

Out on the platform dashed the detectives.

But Darrell gave a leap from the train, and avoided them.

"The fool has deliberately committed suicide, Harry!"

Young King Brady did not reply for a moment.

He had gone down on the car step the moment the desperate man leaped from the car, and was watching Darrell.

His body shot through the air just as the train rushed over

a tiny bridge spanning a stream, and the rascal plunged into the water.

Harry saw him crawl out of the water, mount the embankment and shake his fist at the receding train.

"Crushed to death?" anxiously asked Old King Brady.

"Landed plumb in a stream."

"What a miraculous escape."

"Now what are we going to do about him?"

"Carry out our programme, of course."

"Nonsense! He knows we are going to Helena and will avoid the town."

"I don't believe it. He's got too much nerve to do that."

"Well, his discovery of us going there makes it bad for us."

"Of course. But it couldn't be helped."

"You seem sure of meeting him again."

"So I am. He will probably either disguise himself, or else move with extreme caution. We have got to be a little sharper than usual to win, that's all."

"You mustn't lose track of the fact that he must know Nellie Ray is still alive, and likely to thwart his design to sell her share in the mine, unless he moves quickly in the matter."

"That will, of course, spur him on; if he knows how she was saved. But there isn't such a surety that he does know it."

"Well, we let Golden know it, didn't we, when we captured him?"

"Yes."

"I've found out Golden had a caller in the jail."

"Who?"

"Judging by the description, it must have been one of the two men who escaped our raid on the mint. As he talked with Golden, he must have learned what we told Tom. He then probably posted Darrell."

"In that way he could have found out easily."

The train finally pulled into Helena, and the detectives alighted.

Going to an hotel, they disguised themselves.

A call was made on the chief of the police, and the detectives gave him an history of their case, described Darrell minutely and asked him to post his men to arrest the villain on sight.

"With such a net woven around him," said the old detective, as they walked down the street, "I don't very well see how he can escape arrest, Harry."

"He has set us at defiance for a long time, and we are supposed to be as sharp as anybody, so what would he do with these policemen?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

There followed several days of pretty keen detective work on the part of the Bradys, while they were shadowing the mine-buyer's office.

Young King Brady noticed a peculiar fact.

For several days in succession he observed that the very same men they had found examining the copper mine left their office at three o'clock in the afternoon and proceeded to a house next door to a corner saloon. Here they remained an hour or more.

Then they invariably returned to their office.

On their last call there, they brought a notary public with them and when they departed, Harry observed that they carried a good-sized satchel.

Upon making inquiries, the boy found out that the saloon keeper occupied the house with his family.

He wondered why these rich men should be in the habit of calling on the family of such a person and it aroused his suspicions.

Meeting his partner, he told him all about it.

After a few moments' thought, Old King Brady asked:

"Why not call on the syndicate and ask them, plump and plain, what their peculiar actions mean? They can only refuse to tell us."

"Then come with me, and we'll try them."

They abandoned their disguises and went to the office.

Being recognized and treated politely, Harry asked the president:

"Do you mind explaining to us the object of your calling for several days past on the family of a certain saloon keeper——"

"Ha!" interrupted the gentleman, with a smile. "You've been watching us!"

"So we have," admitted the boy.

"Well, I don't object to telling you. We've been calling there to see Mr. Darrell, who is boarding there under an assumed name. To-day we paid him for his share of the Jolly Joker, and told him we would consider purchasing the share he claims to have acquired from his deceased partner, as we feared your story about the crooked transaction might be true. We did not let on that we knew you, or anything about his alleged villainy, for we can just as well purchase from Miss Ray, if the property falls into her hands."

"And he is there yet?"

"Yes. He's going to leave here to-morrow."

"Then we'll go right over and arrest him."

The Bradys hastened back to the little house.

When they rang the door-bell, a woman answered the summons.

"You have a boarder here?" said Harry.

"Oh, yes. Come in. He's in the back parlor."

"Thank you. We are friends of his."

"Go right in, gentlemen."

And they did.

The door was unlocked and they pushed it open and entered.

Darrell sat at a table, indorsing the check he got from the mine-buyers.

He glanced around in surprise when he heard them coming in, and giving a yell of alarm when he recognized them he drew a pistol.

"Surrender!" cried Old King Brady, sternly.

"Never!" he replied, defiantly.

Out came his weapon and he raised it.

Before he could fire, Old King Brady gave him a shot and he fell like a log, groaning:

"I'm done for now."

"You brought it all on yourself," replied the detective.

"I know. Will you let me off?"

"Certainly not."

"See. I'll give you this indorsed check for a million, if you do."

It was the biggest bribe ever known to be offered, and it showed the detectives that the villain realized the extent of his danger.

But Old King Brady shook his head.

"Not for a thousand times that amount!" he exclaimed, coldly.

They handcuffed the astonished man and after binding his wounds, he was taken away to jail and charged with the murder of Mr. Ray.

A long, tedious trial followed.

But he was convicted despite all the money he spent in defence; for the petrified body, the evidence of the hermit, and the affidavit of Barney Green could not be denied.

Before he was hung he confessed that he had killed Ray in order to secure his share of the copper mine, and had forged the bills of sale.

That virtually put Nellie into possession of half the mine.

On the advice of the Bradys she sold out to the syndicate.

In due time Mark Darrell expiated his crimes on the gallows and nobody rejoiced over it more than Red Buck, the Indian guide.

All the counterfeiters were convicted and sentenced.

When the case was finished, the Bradys left Montana with Nellie, and returned to New York.

Here the girl finally married the man of her choice, and ever after cherished a warm friendship for the great detectives who had done so much for her.

The Bradys soon became interested in other Secret Service work, and added to the great fame they already enjoyed.

It will be our province to give an account of the next case they handled. And it shall be set forth in the next issue of this library.

THE END.

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